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1. The Gospel. God is a holy and pure being, and cannot interact with sin.

We humans are born into sin, and all have sinned. Jesus, God's Son, came to save us from our sins so we could begin to interact with God. Jesus paid for our sins by giving His blood as payment, dying, and coming back on the third day. After being seen by over 500 witnesses, He returned to heaven. There, He is speaking for us to God. Jesus will return one day to get His people.

We receive this payment for sins by believing and accepting this Gospel, or good news, being willing to give up your sins, and be able to say honestly that you believe in your heart that Jesus died for you, came back to life, and you invite Him into your heart and life. This begins your spiritual relationship with God.

2. Faith. Faith is what connects you to God. Faith is trusting, believing, relying upon, having confidence in, and depending on something or someone. In this case, faith in the Gospel is being able to accept this as true, even without tangible proof. It is a personal, subjective, experience. Faith alone is not enough, but it is a beginning. Without it, you cannot have anything else.

3. Confession. Confession is first being able to honestly, from the heart, sincerely state that you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, came back to life on the third day, and will accept you through faith in Him.

Confession is also being able to admit to God that you are a sinner and cannot save yourself, nor can you be good enough to please Him, thus needing a Savior, which God provided in Jesus Christ.

Confession is also being able to state that you are a Christian and have accepted His Gospel and His Spirit into your heart, and therefore are "born again".

First, we are born into sin through Adam.

Second, we are born again into the righteousness of Jesus.

4. Repentance. To "repent" is to turn around, change your mind, do an "about-face", reverse your decision. In this case, you turn away from sin and towards God in Jesus Christ.

If you have accepted His Gospel and His Spirit within you, and you are allowing Him to guide your life, you will want to repent and discard things in your life that do not please Him. This spiritual relationship can become as real as any relationship with another human being, for the Spirit of Jesus Christ will be inside of you, and you speak to Him in prayer in your heart.

5. Baptism(s). Baptism is the act of putting something into something else.

Water baptism is where a person who has accepted the Gospel of Jesus and asked Him to come into their hearts is put under water, and brought back up, in the name of Jesus Christ, as a symbol of the old life in sin being dead and buried. Then it shows that you are being brought back from this grave into a new life in Him. So with water baptism, we follow Him in His death, burial, and resurrection, showing that we have accepted this Gospel of Jesus.

Baptism in His Spirit is when we accept Jesus and His Gospel, and invite Him into our hearts, we are spiritually made a part of all believers in Him, who share the same Spirit. We are put into the spiritual church or body of Jesus Christ.

Baptism of Fire is where we meet with problems, resistance, hostility, confusion, scorn, harrassment, and other things, because of our new belief in Jesus and His Gospel, and the changes you are trying to make in your life as a result. This is to test and strengthen our faith, and encourage us to get closer to God and His people.

6. Laying on of Hands. This is where a fellow-Christian, usually a minister, prays for you and puts one or both hands on you, usually on your head, shoulders, or hands, which helps you receive the filling of the Holy Spirit, or any spiritual gifts God wants you to have. It is to give special blessings, healing, or assign a person a special job to serve God. We can, and should, be filled with His Spirit daily to empower us to live for Him, despite doubts, persecution, distractions, falling into sin, laziness, or discouragement. This power, or energy, can be used up, so may need re-filling. You do not need to have hands laid upon you every time, but can be filled with His Spirit directly from Him in prayer and worship.

7. Resurrection. This means to come back to life.

Believing in the resurrection of Jesus is part of His Gospel. If He only died, He could not have given us new life, because He didn't have a new life. He would still be in His grave and not in Heaven, speaking to God for us, offering His blood in heaven as a payment for our sins. If He did not rise again, His job would have been half-done. If this was the case, when we are baptized, we would stay underwater.

After we pass from this life, our bodies remain dead until He returns for us, at which time we are resurrected in body as Jesus was, and are with Him eternally. That is why the belief in His return is part of His Gospel.

8. Eternal Judgment. After our resurrection, we will all have to face some form of judgment. Those who have rejected Jesus and His Gospel will face harsher punishment than those who have never heard it, or were told a distorted version of it. Those who actively opposed it will be judged more harshly than those who supported it. Our lives will be examined fairly and completely, and how we will be able to be used to serve Him in the next life will be determined by this.

Here it is decided what our rewards and/or punishments will be, what parts of our character we still need to get rid of before entering eternal life, and what our personality really is, in relation to God and others. After all, you will have to spend eternity with them.

9. Prayer. Prayer is conversing with God within and from your heart, or your innermost being. Any relationship, human or spiritual, is based upon communication, and without it no relationship can grow. Through prayer we learn of Him and His will.

Prayer is not a physical thing - it does not matter what position we are in, place we are in, what clothes we are wearing, or what time of day it is.

Prayer is not strictly a mental thing; it is guided by our minds but part of the activity of our spirits. We do not have to say special or "magic" words a special way, repeat the same thing over and over, or have great intellect or education.

Prayer can involve speaking, listening, worshipping, confession, petitioning, intercession (praying for others), thanks, praise, and other things. It is not just begging for things. We should always clear our conscience by confessing any sins and forgive others any grudges we hold. Our daily "attitude of prayer" is to be humble and ready to pray for things and people as He inspires us, during the day.

10. Deity. This is called the "Godhead".

God is one spiritual Being, the Source of all life, love, light, wisdom, power, justice, mercy, and beauty. He is able to reveal Himself in any way He chooses. The ultimate way He revealed Himself to us is through the human being, Jesus Christ.

In order to save humanity, God Himself came to us, born as Yeshu' bar Yusef, or Jesus, son of Joseph, in Bethlehem into a Jewish home, became a Rabbi (Teacher), but unlike others, He taught with power and wisdom from God's Spirit.

God, in His purest form, is Spirit. He relates to us as a Father, as the human

Jesus Christ, and as the Holy Spirit He sent to live within us. It is the same God, relating to us in different ways. It is Scriptural to say that God is One. It is Scriptural to say that God is a living Person. It is Scriptural to say that the Godhead is in Jesus. It is Scriptural to say that Jesus is the "Son of God", not "God, the Son". It is Scriptural to say that Jesus "came in His Father's name", and that He sent His Spirit "in His name", that Jesus (Yeshu') is the "name above all names" that all will bow to. It is Scriptural to say that Jesus is the Son, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End, the First and the Last. It is Scriptural to say that Jesus is the Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. In short, when you have seen and understood Him, you have seen and understood the Father-God. Everything the Father is, Jesus demonstrated.

The important thing is to know what the Bible says and does not say about God.

11. Bible reliability. ★There are thousands of manuscripts and fragments to support the fact that the message of the Scriptures has been well-preserved. Complaints that the Bible has been "changed" cannot refute this. Scripture has been preserved and kept safe in several ways, not lost or changed. ★Archeology has unearthed physical and historical support for the events and people in the Bible. ★Prophecy of the Bible is distinguished from that of others by actually coming true. ★Scripture itself states that it is the inspired word of God. ★When the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek scriptures are converted into numbers, mathematical patterns appear, which cannot exist if they were changed. ★Each book of the Bible has an internal structure that cannot remain if it is changed. ★The stars and constellations historically contain legends of the messages of the Bible. ★Personal experience is an internal and subjective proof by how the Bible can change your life like no other book. ★Scribes, who copied the book by hand, were trained from childhood to respect the Word of God and be extremely careful to copy, letter by letter, and triple-check, with three people, every word and line of the Scriptures. One error causes the whole thing to be destroyed. ★In comparison to any other piece of ancient literature, it is the most reliable text on earth. ★About 95% of the New Testament can be reconstructed just from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, who quoted from it extensively, and all but 11 verses are found in personal letters and other writings from that time. So even if it were true that the Bible was "changed" so much, it would not match the writings that quote from it. (Those eleven verses were mainly from the genealogies and do not directly apply to Gentiles or any major Bible doctrines)

12. Love. It is written that the True Followers of Jesus Christ are known by their love for one another. Without that, it is a good bet that they do not have the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and thus are not truly Christians. Many people claim to be Christians, and some even acquire titles and credentials that indicate some knowledge and involvement with things labelled "Christian", but God does NOT give us the spirit of fear and weakness, but power, and love, and a sound mind. He'll give us the "Spirit" and therefore the mental attitude of love, because love is a primary motivating force of the universe, being a major part of His Character.

We are known by the spirit we express to others, and Christians have the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and this is displayed by how much we allow His Spirit and mental attitudes to express through us. His motivating force to redeem fallen and rebellious humankind was love, and provisions have been made to help us reach this Holy God Who would otherwise not have any contact with us humans at all. "God is love", St. John said, this tells us that where love is, God is. Where God is, love is. No atheist can deny the existence of love, even if they are arrogant enough to deny the existence of a God they have no knowledge of. God loved the people of this world enough to allow the sacrifice of His only Son for us, so that we may be saved.

14. The Three Aspects of Salvation: These have two dimensions. First, our salvation is in the past, present, and future tense. The provisions for our salvation were accomplished at the cross where Jesus paid for our sins with His blood. We are saved in the present because we have in the present accepted Jesus and His gospel. We will be saved in the future when Jesus returns for His people. If we remain in Him, living in His Spirit, we are eternally connected with Him.

Secondly, our spirits, our living, inner beings are "saved" in the sense of being replaced with a new spirit, not in the spirit of Adam we all inherited from our birth, and at our new birth, we are "born again" (from above) by being given a new spirit that isn't cursed with sin. Our "souls" are saved by the "renewal of the mind", the gradual process of eradicating old ideas, values, priorities, habits, behaviors, beliefs, and replacing them with those of God. Our bodies are "saved" in the sense that we will get a new body at the resurrection, suitable for the new environment.

15. Praise & Worship: These are ways we express our gratitude, appreciation, respect, honor, sacrifice, and celebration of all God has done for us. Some people, and churches, are more subdued, formal, traditional; some are vocal, loud, and emotional. In the Bible, it was common for people to worship God by singing, dancing, music, poetry, raising of hands, and clapping. A full realization of the things God has to do and has done to endure with most of humanity, and what Jesus had to do to obtain our salvation, and His love, mercy, grace that made a way to provide salvation and avoid just punishment of a righteous, fair God can give us some inspiration to do so. Those of us who are not so demonstrative in our feelings may feel uncomfortable, even alarmed in a group of people who do, but it takes some getting used to. The important thing is the sincerity of your heart in doing so, however you express it.

16. Rightly Dividing the Word: God inspired the writers of the Bible to give certain messages to His people. Although there may be several ways to view and interpret the Scriptures, there are even more ways to misinterpret them. Here are a few guidelines:

- a. Pray before you study, asking God's Holy Spirit to help your understanding.
- b. Think about the basic questions: who, what, why, when, where, which, how.
- c. Find the basic ideas behind the writing: warning, instruction, prophecy, law.
- d. Understand the figures of speech involved in the passage.
- e. Note the spiritual principles the writer is expressing.
- f. Remember that the message to you from the Bible will not tell you to do anything against His nature and character, and almost never against the laws of the land.
- g. God's message for you individually will be for your spiritual growth, strength, understanding, warnings, reinforcement of past lessons, and maturity as a Christian.

It's a good solid bet that God will NOT tell anyone to set themselves on fire, shoot or blow someone up, or break the secular laws. Reading the Bible, in its context, is important. For example, the old law not to allow a witch to live was for a very different group of people, about a very different group of people, under a different government, concerning persons who would more accurately be called "poisoners" than what we now call today a "witch" or wiccan. This was NOT followed by Christians.

17. Clear conscience: This means that, once you are "born again", your past sins are forgiven, and God no longer holds them against you. You are no longer under the sin and condemnation for those things, and you will not be held accountable for them nor judged for them, and you do not have to condemn yourself with guilt over them. Nor should you let others convince you to do so by bringing them up. That is Satan's job.

There is a place and purpose for guilt, and that is to let you know that you are about to or have violated a moral law. Guilt is an alarm. Once the problem is taken care of, you no longer need the alarm of guilt. You may have to forgive yourself, and others may have to work on forgiving you, and there may be things you have to do in terms of restitution, reconciliation, repentance, or punishment by the earthly powers.

Even if God forgives you, remember that you may have trouble forgiving yourself,

21. Faith-Righteousness: Through God's grace, which is His unearned favor, Him being good to us even though we do not deserve it, God has given us the righteousness of Jesus Christ through our faith in Him. Our own attempts at righteousness will always fall short of His divine perfection, as we have been born into sin, and only by being re-born into Him can we partake in His righteousness. No one has ever lived a totally righteous and sinless life except Jesus. In the Jew's religion, to be "saved" is to earn your salvation by following hundreds of laws and rules, and in times past, the sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. This is an unrealistic goal and expectation for most people - very few people are going to follow the hundreds of laws of the Jewish religion perfectly. Jesus did, however, and when we have His Spirit, we have His righteousness through our faith in Him, hence the term, "faith-righteousness". We follow the moral law (the 10 commandments) out of love and appreciation and desire to please Him, and to follow the example of Jesus. We obey because we are saved, not to get saved.

22. Consecration/ Dedication: This is the process of revising and reviewing our lives in light of one's new commitment to Jesus. For Jesus to be "Lord" or Master of our lives, we have to obey Him. To obey Him, we have to make changes in our lives. We must have His Spirit (even if we don't always "feel" Him within us, or we doubt our salvation), we must study His word, and we must fellowship (associate) with others that believe the way we do. This also means that things in your life that are not pleasing to Him should be removed. Your relationships with others have to be examined. For example, continuing the same relationships with non-Christians, especially those who are actively hostile to and opposed to Christianity will either influence you to give up your new faith or at least be secretive and ashamed of it. Jesus said that if you are ashamed of Him, He will be ashamed of you when we stand before God. You do not want that; you want Him on your side. In short, your life now has a new point of view, which is God's point of view. You have to decide, definitely, to dedicate yourself daily to your new life in Jesus Christ.

23. Renewing the mind: St. Paul said to the Roman church, don't be conformed to this world and its ways - don't copy the ways of non-Christians; you're in Rome, but DON'T do as the Romans do. Instead, be changed by making changes in your thinking. The Creator, Yahweh, the Father-God, is now your lord and master. If you want His gift and promise of forgiveness of sin and eternal life, you must remain as one of His, because the gift of eternal life and promise of salvation is for they that not only start out as His but remain His. There is no "once-saved, always-saved" teaching in the Bible. Your old ways of thinking, however, want you to continue as you were. This is a process of changing your habitual thinking that takes time, patience, work, study, often counsel, persistence, and prayer and worship, consistently and regularly. It does not come overnight and no one said it is easy. The more you put your mind on things that are good and acceptable to Him the less time you will have for other things.

24. Kenosis: This is a Greek word often used to describe the way Jesus had to "empty" Himself of being God so that He could be fully human while acting in our place. He dedicated His whole life to the service of God His Father, submitting to and obeying Him in all things, as our example. This was a person who voluntarily set aside His identity as God and the powers and privileges that go with that status, and became a human like us. He had to sacrifice His own personal opportunities to get power, pleasure, position. As a human, He could have "gone His own way" and "did His own thing," but He chose to live as a Servant of God, setting an example for us.

Likewise, we have to "empty" ourselves of things that will interfere with our service of God. Some of us have more to give up or change than others, but we all have something. This does not mean that we cannot have anything of our own lives, but they are no longer the central, controlling forces for us. They are no longer our "gods" anymore.

29. The Law of God: We should know and follow God's moral laws--not to get saved, but because we are.

The "Greatest Commandment", Jesus told us, was:

"Hear, O Israel! Yahweh your God is One.

And you shall love Yahweh your God,
with all of your heart, with all of your soul,
with all of your power, and with all of your mind.

This is the greatest and the First commandment.

And the second is like it:

Love your neighbor as yourself.

On these two commandments hang the law and the prophets".

Along with this is the "Golden Rule" of Jesus:

"Do unto others, as you would have them do to you", or,

"Whatsoever you wish men to do for you, do likewise also for them;

for this is the law and the prophets".

The "Law" He was speaking of was this:

I am Yahweh, your God...You shall not have any other gods besides Me.

You shall not make statues or figures of any creature and worship it.

You shall not use My Holy Name carelessly or disrespectfully.

Honor your mother and father, so that you may have a long life.

Remember My day of rest, and keep it holy. You have six days to work and the seventh day to rest and dedicate to Me.

You shall not commit murder.

You shall not steal.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not lie under oath to get someone into, or out of, trouble.

You shall not selfishly desire things that another person has, and feel entitled to their blessings, or feel that they are not deserving of them.

First, we see that in the "Greatest commandment", we have to HEAR Him, pay attention to His word, and respect it. What He says should mean something to us. Next, He speaks to Israel, His people. In former times, Israel as a nation was His people, but at this time, the kingdom of heaven is open to anyone who will accept His gospel. Yahweh, or the one above all, not a local, tribal god or national god, but the Creator of all, is One. Before anything is said about "love", as much as it is focused upon, you cannot ignore the first part of the Greatest Commandment. You have to understand that He is One, not two, not three. He does not want us to be confused about Him. He does not want us to have vague, fuzzy ideas about Him, but know Him personally as a real, living Being that is distinct and separate from anyone and everyone else.

Now we get to the "love" part. Once you listen to Him and are focused on Him, and understand that He speaks to His people, and that He is One, then you love Him with all of your being. Understand that He is the source of all love, and anytime you have loved or been loved, you have experienced part of God. This is an act of will, and not dependent upon feelings. We don't always feel love for someone, but we do.

Love your neighbor, or anyone in need, the same way you love and care for yourself. St. Paul said that no one hates his own body, but cares for it. In the same way, when we understand that we all are under God, our creator, and He blesses the good and the bad and allows troubles to the good and bad alike, we realize that we are all in the same "boat", or in modern terms, "spaceship earth". We cannot afford to feel that only our race, or family, or nation, or country will be or should be blessed by God. As an ambassador, and representative of Jesus to others, we should be able to share some of the love that God gives to us. We then can truly treat others as we wish to be treated. We understand then the cause-and-effect relationships in all.

The first five of the ten commandments generally deal with our relationship with God and authority; the second five with how we relate to one another.

33. Angels. An angel is a messenger, sometimes used for any kind of messenger, or in Christian context, an evangelist or pastor. God created several kinds of spirit servants and messengers to perform numerous tasks throughout creation. They are greater in power, knowledge, and wisdom than we are, and have access (as a rule) to the throne of God. Angels, of many kinds, can do many different things, both in this world and in others. They are not created in the image of God, but they do have consciousness and freedom of choice to choose good or evil. They are God's, not ours, to command. One job of God's people in the kingdom will be to judge angels, according to their obedience to God.

The traditional order of heavenly beings like this (Tagmata) are: Angels, Archangels, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Dominions, Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim. There are also subdivisions, and other names for ones under satan.

34. The Armor of God: When we become a Christian, we go from an enemy of God to His child, and a friend of Satan to his enemy. There are many evil forces in the world, and the Bible called them demons, devils, evil or unclean spirits. These, led by Satan, were part of God's angels once, but chose to do evil. They hate God and the people of God, and seek opportunities to harass, deceive, tempt, steal from, harm or discredit Christians. For this, we are given the spiritual "armor" for our spirit being to protect ourselves. It does not happen automatically. This is given when we pray for and consciously activate it. This consists of:

- Helmet of Salvation. Without salvation, you cannot have access to anything else from God. If you are already part of Satan's kingdom, it doesn't matter; you don't want to defend against the king of this world. This is to protect our minds and thoughts from evil influence.

- Waist covered with the Truth. The Truth should be our foundation for life. If we do not accept Jesus and His Gospel, we do not have the truth. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to the Father-God except through Him.

- Chest covered with righteousness. Our most vital organs are protected with the righteousness of Jesus, certainly not our own. This keeps us connected with God.

- Feet covered with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. We are to be bringers of peace and the Gospel wherever we go. You should always be ready to do what you can to be a peacemaker, and always have the Gospel of Jesus fresh in your mind, to share it.

- Shield of Faith. Faith is not physical or mental, but a spiritual function. You must hold to the truth of what you believe, your personal experience of conversion and spiritual life, at all times. You thus must keep your identity in Him foremost in mind.

- Sword of the Spirit. This is God's Word. The more you study, understand, and recall, the more you can use in daily life. When tempted by Satan, Jesus used the Scriptures to defend Himself against spiritual and mental attacks.

- Prayer. When you are communing with God, and receiving more of God's Spirit and power, you are less likely to be attacked by Satan.

35. The Kingdom of God: This is not specifically "heaven", but the Kingdom of God is best described as: anywhere that God's Spirit is allowed to rule. That is why Jesus said, the Kingdom is within you, if you are allowing His Spirit to rule there. Jesus told us to pray that His Father's will be done "on earth, as it is in heaven", that is, that His Spirit would be voluntarily allowed to operate within more people. God allows us freedom of choice, and does not force Himself upon us. We have to submit to Him from our hearts. Seek the kingdom of heaven first, Jesus said, because above all, even more than food, drink, or clothing, we should allow God's Spirit to rule in our lives. Man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that God speaks.

38. Sin: A big deal is made of sin. Why? God hates it and wants it to stop! Sin ruined His perfect creation. Sin is thoughts, words, or actions that are not in harmony with God, His will, or His law. The law was given to teach humans moral boundaries so that they would have an idea how to behave and choose whether or not to remain within those boundaries or step outside of them. In short, sin is breaking God's law. Because God is holy and pure, He cannot have contact with sin, nor allow it into His kingdom. Sin began in heaven, when His top angel, Hawlayle, or Lucifer, became so proud of himself that He thought to rebel against God Himself. Then he tempted Eve, who tempted Adam, and brought sin and all that goes with it - sickness, suffering, decay, disease, and destruction - into this world, and because sin is a spiritual thing, passed down through everyone descended from Adam till now. Jesus became our "Second Adam" so that, born - again, we have that sinful spirit removed and replaced with a spirit from God without that Adamic spirit of sin and rebellion. This also means that, sinning after becoming born-again is our soul's doing, the result of our old mentalities and conditioning, not our new, uncontaminated spirit's.

39. Fruits of the Flesh: The opposite of the "Fruit of the Spirit", these are things that grow out of the "seed" of sin we inherited from Adam. This sinful "fruit" can appear as many things and many ways, but listed specifically are:

Adultery, impurity, shameless obscenity, worshipping material possessions, witchcraft, hatred, starting trouble, jealousy, uncontrolled anger, selfish ambition, breaking up friendships and peaceful relations, splitting up the church, envy, drunkenness, gluttony, orgies, and partying. (some of that was my paraphrase)

These things were natural to us, and are natural to others who have not been born-again, and part of how this world works. God wants us to go against the grain of the world's ways and produce His "fruits" from His Spirit, not the fruits of the "flesh" (our human inheritance from Adam).

40. Names & Title of God: God has many names, titles, descriptions, and terms of His relationships. He has a name that only He knows. Because of the big argument over the idea of the "trinity", which may exist, but is usually explained in such a confusing, sometimes bizarre manner that it causes more confusion than enlightenment, I am deliberately avoiding using these terms for now. We will get to that later, once actual Scripture is fully learned. The Bible uses many of the same terms for the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and it is after all Scriptural to say that God is one, therefore, we should not try too hard to think of God as divided into three "Persons", when the Bible just does not say that. Much, much more on that later...

We can think of God in these ways:

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Our Creator & Originator | p. The Author & Finisher of our faith |
| b. Our Father & Parent | q. Our Giver of Grace & Mercy |
| c. Our Savior & Rescuer | r. Our Avenger |
| d. Our Judge Who knows all things | s. Yahweh - Who exists without help of others, & can reveal Himself in any way He wishes |
| e. Our Redeemer, "Buyer out of bondage" | t. Elohim - Great God & Mighty One |
| f. Our Helper, Supporter, Encourager | u. Most High - above all His Creation (Elyon) |
| g. Our Example, Leader, Mentor | v. The All-Mighty One (El-Shaddai) |
| h. Our Healer, Who makes us whole | w. Our Lord & Master (Adonai or Maryeh) |
| i. Our Source of all Good | x. Jesus - Yeshu' (Aramaic) or Yahshua (Heb.) |
| j. Our Teacher & Source of Divine Wisdom | y. Our Life-Giver (Muhyawnaw - Aramaic) |
| k. Our King & authority | z. The Son of God (Bard'lawhaw - Aramaic) |
| l. Our Guide | |
| m. Our Truth | |
| n. Our Security & Eternal Salvation | |
| o. Our Provider | |

Because of confusion very early in church history about Who and What God is, and the influence of philosophy and other religions, and the differences in the languages used then and now causes more confusion than anything. No, we cannot know every bit of God's nature, but we can clear out unnecessary cobwebs in our thinking. Confusion

43. The Lord's Prayer: When Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, Jesus gave them a basic format to follow:

Pray like this: Our Father-God in heaven, may Your holy name always be sacred to us. Let Your kingdom come to us and Your will be done here on earth, like it is done in heaven. Supply us with our daily needs, and forgive us our wrongs like we forgive they who have wronged us. Do not let us fall into temptation, but protect us and help us escape the power of the evil one. Because You have the kingdom, the power, and all the glory we pray this, forever, amen.

These are basic things necessary to pray regularly about. There are many other ways to pray, and many other things to pray about, and no one in the Bible prayed this in His exact words.

But we have several important lessons from this:

- a. God is our heavenly, spiritual Father, and we are brothers and sisters in Him.
- b. His name is holy and sacred and we should use it with reverence and respect.
- c. His kingdom and His will comes through us, to duplicate how it is in heaven.
- d. He is the Source that supplies our daily needs, and our eternal needs.
- e. He forgives us, in proportion to how much we forgive.
- f. We need protection and warning about daily, frequent temptations and evil.
- g. We pray to Him because He has all authority and power to answer.
- h. We owe Him submission to His will to further His kingdom, we should acknowledge His power over all, and give Him His deserved glory and honor.
- i. Forever - not a one-time thing, this should always be our prayer.

44. Evil Spirits: from Satan on down (or up?!).

Because God's angels were given freedom of choice, about a third chose to follow Hawlayle, the head angel, usually translated as "Lucifer" (the Roman god of light, the planet Venus). Hawlayle was the highest of all angels, better in every way than all of the others. The Creator blessed him more than anyone, like Adam, and likewise both had betrayed Him.

Hawlayle's job was to lead the angels in praise and worship of the Creator. To do so, he was given beauty, intelligence, and talent beyond the others, to optimally serve God. However, pride entered his heart. He had a great deal to be proud of, in comparison with the other angels, not God! But he did extend this to God, thinking that he would be able to take over heaven.

This was not going to happen.

He led a rebellion against God and the rest of the angels with his followers, and lost. He and his followers were thrown to earth, at which time God's perfect creation was ruined through sin. This is why God has been in an ongoing conflict for the souls of humans with Satan until the very end, because it presently serves a purpose for Him. That is why we have the "armor of God".

In part, God wants us to develop spiritual strength by fighting and resisting, rejecting and understanding, hating and eradicating sin in our lives. In the same way physical strength is developed by resistance against our muscular power, our spiritual selves must develop strength by fighting against sin and Satan. Remember, this is to prepare for what we must do in the next life. He wants spiritual beings in His kingdom who are strong and can do the jobs He has for them.

On earth, Satan and his followers provoke, incite, suggest, inspire, encourage, promote, and support evil and rebellion in every form. He can be very subtle and confusing because he is disguised as an "Angel of Light" (understanding and goodness) and imitates things that God does. That is why we must intimately know the Truth.

47. Holiness. We cannot "see" Yahweh-God without holiness. the Bible tells us. It is one of the more misleading terms used in the Bible, that today's people rarely use, except in swearing. To be "holy", like the term "perfect", does not mean that you are in a state of sinless perfection and make no mistakes. It means that you are fully dedicated to God and focused upon serving Him, and your priorities and personal values have been permanently re-arranged so that He is number One in your life, not yourself, your family, your job, or anything else. Holiness is also part of submission, as when Jesus (Yahshua) was in the garden of Gethsemane and prayed, "not My will, but Your will be done". Holiness and submission is what we are striving and working for when we pray the "Lord's Prayer" and say, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven". Holiness is also being filled, and led, by His Holy Spirit into all truth, to be taught by Him, led and guided by Him, given a conscience by Him to regulate our conduct and give us personal boundaries, to speak for Him, to help us to recall His word when it is needed for mental or spiritual battles. Holiness, in short, is living a Christian life, controlled by His Spirit and Word, and not having any time for sin, flesh, or the devil.

48. Abraham & Sons. The Bible mentions Abraham very often, and with others, are persons we should be familiar with, when learning the Scriptures.

A man named Abram was born to Terah in the land of "the Chaldees", or who we now call "Chaldeans" or the particular Arab tribe in the land we now call Iraq. This land is very ancient, and sections of it has also been called Mesopotamia, Sumer, Assyria, Babylon, Akkad, and other things, depending upon the "nation-state" that was in control at the time. For example, when Jonah the prophet was sent to "Ninevah", it was in the same area, but the Ninevites were in power at the time. His brothers (also of Terah) were Nahor and Haran. This was over 2 thousand years before Christ. Yahweh-God spoke to him one day, telling him to pack up and take his whole family to the west and south, to a land the God would show to Him. Because Abram was pleasing to God, and did things that gained His approval, God decided that Abram would be a good person to establish a covenant, or a contract, with. Abram worshipped and served God faithfully, and God enjoyed his company. He was called "a friend of God", and God changed his name to Abraham, from "exalted father" to "father of many nations", to promise that Abraham would have many descendants, and his family would not become extinct. Not only that, the promised Messiah, the One Who was to bring salvation to the world, would come from this family.

But Abraham had a problem - he could not make babies. His wife, Sarai, had no children, and this was not only a social disgrace but flew in the face of the promise Yahweh-God made to Abraham. He could hardly be the "father of many nations" if he could not manage to make at least one baby. So, when Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarai (changed to Sarah) were given a baby boy named Issac. Because of a weakness of faith on the part of Sarai, she told him to try to get her homemaker pregnant, one Hagar, and he did. This child was called Ishmael. Thirteen years later, Issac, the promised child (not the one they made outside of the promise) was born. Ishmael was the founder of the Arab races we know of, and Issac one of the founders of the people of Israel, known as Jews. The name Jew is from the tribe of Judah, one of 12 sons. The name Israel came from one of Issac's sons, named Jacob (Yakkob), which God changed to Israel.

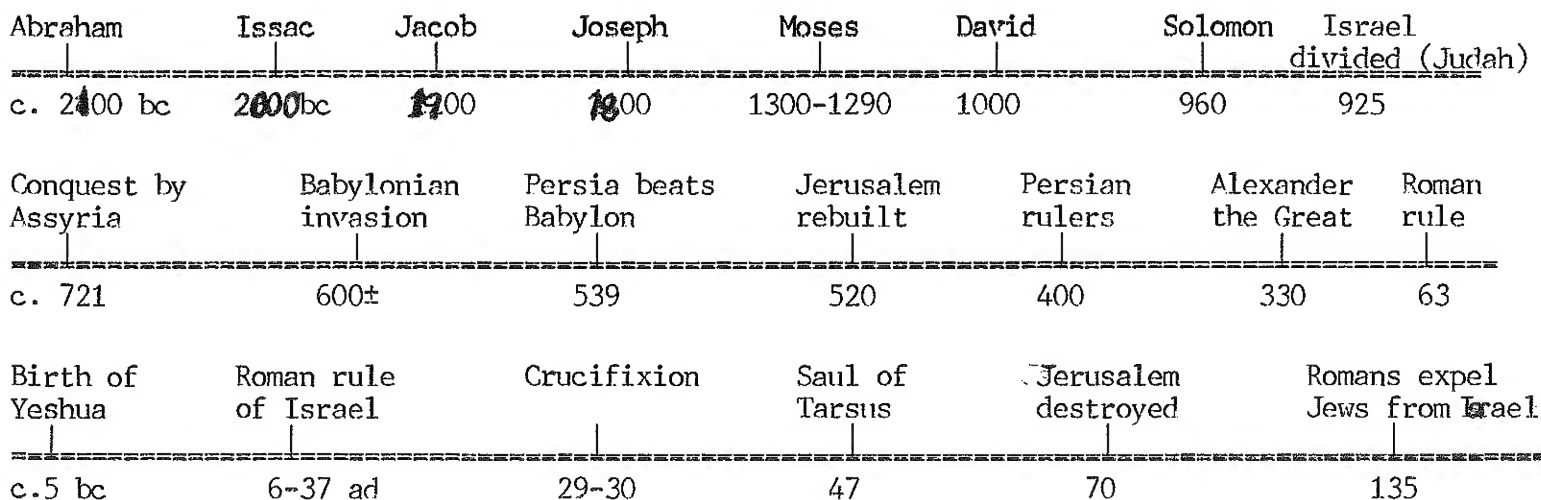
There is the famous story of Yahweh-God testing Abraham by telling him to take Issac up to a mountain and sacrifice him. Once God seen that he would do anything that Yahweh-God commanded him, he made sure that Issac was not harmed. This was one of the things that made Abraham the example of faith and trust in God, for Yahweh-God said that Issac would be part of the promised people, and no matter what, he was going to be part of the promised people, Israel, even if God told him to sacrifice him. Even Melchizedek, a legendary figure in Israel's history, and a symbol of Jesus would bless him. Melchizedek was a symbol of Jesus and Abraham was a symbol of the Christian who fully trusts in Yahweh-God.

49. David & Solomon. Dawidh, in Hebrew, or "Beloved". Shepherd, musician, king, writer of most of the book of Psalms, father of Solomon - Shelomoh, or "Peaceful", famed wise-man and writer of most of the book of Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. David was the son of Jesse, the youngest, and due to King Saul being out of favor with Yahweh-God, the prophet Samuel was sent by Yahweh to anoint (pour oil upon as a symbol of being chosen for a special purpose for God) David as the next king. He was famed for defeating the giant Goliath with a slingshot and faith in Yahweh's power and support. Friend of (Prince) Jonathan. Driven to "outlawry" because of King Saul's jealousy, his other son Absalom's rebellion and treachery, to briefly live with his enemies. Important part of the history of Israel and Messianic prophecies.

Solomon was the 3rd & last king of a united Israel, helping to bring the nation to it's highest level of prosperity and power. Received divine wisdom from Yahweh-God, but later, due to excessive alliances with other countries and political marriages & concubines, fell into disfavor with God. Built the famous Temple for Yahweh in Jerusalem with the assistance of friend King Hiram of Tyre. An expert in botany and zoology. Wrote 1,005 songs.

50. Moses. Mees (Egyptian), Mosheh (Hebrew), 'one who was pulled out.' Deliverer of the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Trained in Egypt as a high official and lived there for 40 years. Sympathizing with one of his fellow-Hebrews being abused, he killed the Egyptian who was abusing him and was a fugitive in the land of Midian with a priest named Jethro (Reuel), and married his daughter Zipporah. Called by Yahweh to go back to Egypt and with his brother Aaron try to get the king of Egypt, the Pharaoh, to release Israel. Through a process of 10 "plagues" to try to persuade Pharaoh, Israel was finally let go, then the army sent to bring them back. The Egyptian army was destroyed when the waters of the Sea of Reeds that Yahweh parted for the Israelites came back and drowned the Army of Egypt who chased them. 40 more years were spent wandering around and getting used to the idea of not being dependent upon Egypt, and being an independent nation under Yahweh-God. The law was given to Moses to give to the Israelites, and periodically was followed.

Aproximate time-line:



c. = "circa" or around this time.

bc = some use "BCE", before common era. before the birth of Christ.

ad = some use "CE" or common era. After the birth of Christ.

54. Figures of Speech. The Bible contains idioms, metaphors, slang, and phrases that people often used in that time and place, and in that culture. Idioms of Hebrew and Aramaic languages may be completely unfamiliar to us today, thus being a major part of the confusion, imagined "contradictions", misunderstandings, and problems involved in reading the Bible and taking it seriously.

Taking metaphors or symbolic language literally, and literal parts figuratively has been probably the biggest problem in Bible study. The Bible and its message, its Savior, and its value has been rejected by many on the assumption that they would surely be able to understand an ancient book with no training. Human assumptions and arrogance ~~are~~ often the cause of problems, including full-scale wars, and when a person is highly educated, their pride compels them to believe that they do not need any additional knowledge or information in order to understand the Bible. This is not true.

Here are a few of the hundreds of figures of speech.

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| a. Hyperbole (exaggeration) | n. Syntheton (combination) |
| b. Inversion (epanodos) | o. Omission (Ellipsis) |
| c. Parenthesis | p. Irony (Eironeia) |
| d. Interchange (hypallage) | q. Dialogue |
| e. Quotation (gnome) | r. Apostrophe |
| f. Change of noun (metonymy) | s. Inclusion (association) |
| g. Parallelism | t. Exchange of parts of speech (antimereia) |
| h. Euphemism | u. Allegory |
| i. Personification | v. Double meaning (Amphibologia) |
| j. Type & antitype | w. Regression (Anachoresis) |
| k. Resemblance (simile) | x. Expansion (diexodos) |
| l. Symbol | y. Mocking (chleuasmos) |
| m. Redundancy (pleonasm) | z. Correspondence |

Some of these you may recognize, some may sound familiar, and some you would recognize if you were to see an example of it. We all use figures of speech in our everyday lives, and think nothing of it, but if we try to understand a foreign land or language, we become acutely aware of these things. The Companion Bible edited by E. Bullinger (1898) is available to study them in some detail, or just to become familiar with them. Bullinger has another book of over 1,000 pages on the subject.

Before you give up on the Bible, or begin to believe that what a critic of the Bible says, be sure to understand what exactly is and is not being said. Don't take a critic's word for it, especially one who probably has no actual knowledge or any education worth speaking of. The Bible is for believers, not unbelievers.

55. Dispensations & Covenants. A dispensation is simply a period of time in which God is operating and relating to His people in a certain way. The Pre-Bible dispensations are only speculated upon, but the ones we are given are after creation.

Innocence is the time in which God's human creations did not know right from wrong, or that such things existed. They had not yet sinned and did not yet have awareness of a broken fellowship with God. They did not yet have a sense of guilt from their guilty conscience. God's covenant with them was, don't eat of this tree - ever. One rule. Of course they did, and became guilty of violating God's rule, shame, and the break in the connection between them and God. The party, as they say, was over.

Most of the people in this area went by their conscience, so some people say that the (period of time) covenant here was that of conscience. If they ignored their conscience, they were accountable, for that was the main deterrent to doing wrong. They also had the law of Hammurabi, a king, which most of the people followed.

Noah's covenant was part of the dispensation of judgment. God began judging the people and punishing them for ignoring their consciences and the law of Hammurabi, which led up to the Great Flood. God made sure that a small group of people survived in each area, as representative of His creation, hence the universal stories in every culture of a Great Flood and a surviving few, usually as a result of making God angry. 120 years (in the Bible) were given to give up their sins and turn to God.

The dispensation of promise was based upon Yahweh-God's relationship with Abram, whose name He changed to Abraham. Because of Abraham pleasing Yahweh-God so much, He made a covenant with him, that if he followed Yahweh, God would bless him and cause his offspring to multiply so much they'd cover the earth. Yahweh called Abraham out of Ur of Chaldea (Iraq) to a promised land, which we now know as Israel. Because Abraham worshipped the True and Living God, Yahweh, and not the tribal deities everyone else did, he was blessed.

The dispensation of law was part of the mission of Moses. After Abraham's great-grandson died, over 400 years later the people of Israel found themselves in slavery in Egypt, feeling that Yahweh had forgotten them, and pretty much forgotten Him. Most followed the Egyptian's gods and occultism taught there. Yahweh had to re-train both Moses and the entire population in His ways and laws, which took many years to accomplish. So at the center of these was the 10 commandments, then all of the other rules, laws, and procedures that were necessary to begin to serve Yahweh and reject the Egyptian gods. One of the reasons for the 10 plagues on Egypt was to show that Yahweh was superior to them all (each plague showed the weakness and inadequacy of their main gods). For example, Ra was their god of light, so Yahweh caused complete darkness to show Ra could not do a thing about it.

The dispensation of the Throne of David is an extension of the promise to Abraham, that the promised Messiah, Yahshua (Jesus) would be one of his descendants. Even though the throne of Israel didn't last very long afterwards, almost a thousand years later, the promise was fulfilled. Yahweh-God has a spiritual throne of David, led by Yahshua, and not a physical one they all anticipated.

The dispensation of grace began with the new covenant (new testament) of the Gospel of Yahshua the Messiah, wherein He fulfilled the prophecies of the promised Anointed One and King of Israel, and began a spiritual kingdom in His people's hearts. Grace means that our sins are paid for by the blood of Yahshua, and we are saved by grace, through faith in Him, not by doing good deeds and avoiding bad deeds.

The dispensation of tribulation is where, in the end-times, Yahweh's people will be persecuted, harassed, attacked, mistreated, and even killed for their religion of the Gospel of Yahshua and His way of life. Satan and his demons, and thus his followers will be empowered to do so in the last days.

The dispensation of the millenium is the 1,000 year time afterwards when Satan is not allowed to operate. This is additionally to show that, even without Satan and his demons human nature will be human nature. Not everything can be blamed upon him.

The dispensation of Satan's return will be when after this 1,000 years he will be given another chance, which he will refuse. He will immediately go back to doing what he always did. The dispensation of the new heavens & earth is eternal life in Yahshua.

58. Symbols. These are marks, drawings, geometric figures, icons or images, and so forth that stand for something or someone else. From the idea of symbols came art and language, for example our alphabets. It became a way to preserve information for the future. The first good example was Cain, who killed his brother, and God put a mark on him - in some way made him stand out from everyone else, so that no one would kill him in revenge.

Here are a few common symbols in the Bible:

Light or lamp - understanding, knowledge, wisdom
Lion - Yahshua (Jesus as victorious Lion of Judah)
Lamb - Yahshua as God's sacrifice
Stars - Angels, messengers, representatives
Fire - Holy Spirit
Dove - Holy Spirit, peace
Oil - Holy Spirit, anointing, healing
Bread - the Word of God; food, generally, daily necessities
Sword - Word of God, power of God, discernment & justice
Gold & Silver - That which we value and treasure; pure character
Oceans & seas - peoples, nations
Mountains - major problems, obstacles, political power
Serpent, dragon - Satan, enemies, opponents
The True Vine, the Branch - Yahshua (Jesus)
Branches - disciples, followers of the True Vine
Fruits - behavior, results, wages, acts

People, names, clothes, natural objects, gestures, actions, rituals, and many other things can be symbolic of something spiritual or physical. Some say that all of physical creation is just a "shadow" and "type" of something spiritual.

59. Types of churches. When seeking for and choosing a church to attend, there are several things to consider:

1. Use of the Bible is central to their teachings
2. They have tolerance, flexibility, and recognition of individuality
3. Access - transportation, time, distance
4. A sense that, not only do you belong, but God belongs there.
5. No pressure to conform to the church's by-laws
6. They do not tell you that they are the ONLY way to heaven - they alone
7. They do not require all of your money or possessions
8. There is some accountability of the leadership with Higher Authority
9. They respect worldly authorities and governments
10. Everything is centered upon Yahshua (Jesus)
11. They do not claim that you can, in ANY way, "earn" salvation
12. They are clear on sin and hell
13. There is no fear of leaving, "or else"
14. They do not generate a dependence upon the leadership
15. You do not have to accept what they say without question or thought
16. You are not isolated from your family friends
17. No sleep deprivation, radical diet changes, "wearing you out"
18. They respect privacy and you do not have to confess everything to them

There are other things I could add, but these are the main ones.

A Liturgical church is one in which centers around the eucharist (mass, communion) and is highly ritualistic, formal, and ceremonial.

Pentecostal churches are much more spontaneous, vocal, and emotional.

General protestant churches are somewhere in between, usually fundamentalist.

Liberal churches are open to anything BUT Biblical teachings, and usually open to "New Age" teachings, sometimes bizarre syncretism and "Political correctness".

Prosperity churches are usually pentecostal, focus on material blessings & "faith".

63. A Christian's Day. Ideally, a new Christian will work to gradually develop new habits into their lifestyle and routines which reflect the values of their conversion. Trying to do all at once is asking for failure. Here are some:

a. Begin the day with prayer time, perhaps a chapter or so of Proverbs and the Psalms. You might ask God for direction and leading in His will, what to say (and NOT to say), do (and NOT to do), things according to His will. You might thank Him for the new day and for His armor of the Spirit to protect you from attacks of Satan. And, you might have some petitions or requests.

b. During the day, you will have opportunities to offer quick prayers for things as they come to your attention. A crisis, something on the news, a need, help in the making of decisions, or maybe someone else's request are examples. The Spirit of God may put things into your mind to pray for. It is good habit to cultivate.

c. Opportunities to share your conversion and beliefs (or "witnessing") are also possible, and through experience you might sense the urging of God's Spirit to go to a specific person or place, offer assistance, leave a tract, or just pray. DON'T ARGUE.

d. You might have a longer time set aside for Bible study and prayer, and might either be alone or with family or friends, or both.

e. Remember that we all fail, sin, doubt, fall, slip up - it's usually not the end of the world. Sudden radical changes in your lifestyle could attract unwanted attention and harassment, even from friends and family, who may miss the old you, even if the old you was a bad person. You may also have more temptations than ever before. Confess your sin to God in Yahshua's name and ask for forgiveness, knowing you have it.

f. It takes practice and work to continuously have the presence of God in mind at all times, all day, every day, and try to behave as Yahshua would in your situation.

g. Evenings, before retiring, are a time for reflection on the lessons learned of the day, and final prayers and meditations. Some people read a chapter of Proverbs and Psalms here also. This is where the traditional "vespers" prayers are.

64. A Christian's week. Here is the traditional structure of how time was organized in the early church. I'm not very traditional, so I will point out that it is optional, but to be "on the same page" as a traditional church (orthodox), you may try to keep this pattern in mind:

Sunday: The first day of the week, which the resurrection of Yahshua is celebrated, and our resurrection in Him. Almost all churches have a Sunday service, and some have three or four. Because early Christians didn't want to be put in the same category as the Jews, who were being persecuted by Romans, they moved their day of worship from the Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday. Much later, the Roman Catholic Church made it a "law" to "replace" God's Sabbath day with a day honoring the sun-god, hence "Sun-day". It is not a Biblical change. It is a tradition of the Catholic church that most Protestants keep.

Monday: The first day of the work week, created by a labor union years ago. On this day we may bless our homes, families, property, and future prosperity. Traditionally, it is to honor the Holy Angels.

Tuesday: We may bless those in authority over us, our nation, employers and/or employees, our president and cabinet, lawmakers, judges, governors, county and city officials, our parents and spouse. Traditionally to honor St. John the Baptist & Prophets.

Wednesday: We may bless our bodies, our health, our minds, our concerns, the time God gives us to serve Him, our sleep and dreams, our thoughts and fantasies, healing, our energy and food and drink we partake in. Traditionally, it is a minor fasting day, in light of Yahshua in the garden before His crucifixion, and betrayal by Judas, and abandonment by friends. Also one meditates on the mystery of the cross and Mary.

Thursday: We may bless our friends, pets, local churches and worthy causes and organizations, people in trouble, jail, prison, mental homes, hospitals, the homeless, the abused, and all children. Traditionally, it is to honor the Holy Apostles & St. Nicolas.

Friday: We should perhaps pray for Christians everywhere, most especially missionaries, evangelists, pastors, teachers, converts, all Christians under persecution, especially they in communist and muslim countries. This day also commemorates the crucifixion.

continued

66. A Christian's Life. The Bible often speaks of the way one behaves, acts, and lives -- their character -- as their "walk". By this lesson we mean to teach that being a Christian is a way of life, a "walk", according to how much you submit to God's Spirit and leading, how consistent you are, how dilligently you accept the way of Yahshua.

A Christian should "walk" or behave:

Worthy of Yahweh
In truth (honestly)
In the Spirit
After Yahshua's example
With good deeds
With wisdom

Circumspectly (carefully)
In the Light
Pleasing God
With faith
To glorify Yahweh
Within the (10) commandments

When a person decides to seriously commit their lives to Yahshua as Lord & Master, they will make changes in their thinking, feeling, acting, reacting, not acting, values, priorities, social life, entertainment, habits, routines, rituals, decorations, and art. They may also gain and lose friends and enemies, have chages at work, opportunities, temptations, tests, trials, blessings, rewards, family, and life goals.

Some things are obviously more supportive of Christian life than others; some are more subtle. Many things are generally neuteral and depend upon their use. There are some things that may be permissable for some people, and not for others. Everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses, and what one person can take or leave at will, the next person may have to avoid at all costs.

These are essential elements of a Christian's life, and are mandatory:

Prayer
Fellowship
Praise & worship
becoming sensitive to the Spirit
Cultivating Spiritual love
Confessing sin to God

Bible Study
Communion
elimination of harmful things
recognizing right & wrong
Forgiving others
In humility

When the Bible speaks of walking "in the flesh" it refers to one who seeks above all to gratify their own personal desires and pleasures. The worst kind will seek to use others, regardless of the consequences, to obtain that which satisfies their lusts and impulses. Addicts are like this, when they reach a certain level of obsession and their addictions, whatever they are, control them. To "walk in darkness" is the same idea of walking in the flesh. "Light" here refers to God being "Light", as the book of 1 John says, and when we walk in light we behave with the knowledge that God sees all things at all times. "Darkness" is believing we can hide something from God and others, and sometimes ourselves. People love the darkness, Yahshua said, for it keeps their sins from being exposed to the Light and therefore they are not afflicted with guilt of their wrongdoing. So light and darkness can be metaphors for one's conscience and the spiritual function of regulating our behavior. If the light within is really darkness, Yahshua said, how great that darkness is!

This unavoidably goes into the fact that when we are "born again", our old spiritual being we were born with is replaced with a new spiritual being. Our minds and bodies are the same, and they will make the same demands as they always have. But now, things we used to do are viewed differently. They have a new "light". We see them differently. We may think of the affects upon others. We may think of how it will look to God. These things we may have never considered before are a result of having a new spirit within, which gives us a new conscience. We can "walk in the new life" Paul said to the Romans. The spirit gives us life, and it is a new life, if we can develop it. If we are in the Spirit of Yahshua the Messiah, we are new creations in Him, old things have passed away and everything has become new.

67. Messianic prophecies: Since a new Christian is certain to hear the terms, "Christ" and "Messiah" and the like, some explanation is in order. With the title, "Christian", they bear part of this name, thus should know what it means.

As a symbol of being chosen by God for special purposes, a person was often "anointed" or had oil poured or sprinkled upon their head, and it was announced for what purpose the ritual had taken place. That is, olive oil was used a great deal in middle-eastern countries, for various purposes, and anointing was not in itself an unusual occurrence. What was unusual was a prophet anointing someone and announcing that they are the next king! Prophets were like-wise anointed, and priests of the temple.

For a very long time, God of Israel, Yahweh, promised an Anointed One, to act as our priest, prophet, and potentate (king) - "thrice-anointed", the liturgy says. The nation of Israel waited for hundreds of years, and occasional hopefuls fell by the way-side in the process. After the book of Malachi, the last of the Old Testament books, four hundred years went by without a message from Yahweh. In the meantime, the Greeks and Romans took over and gave the Israelites trouble, and Israel hoped that the Promised Anointed One, or Messiah (M'shiakh) would come and kick the Greeks and Romans out, and all of the other undesireables, and restore Israel to its former glory and prosperity.

So, here came a carpenter: Yeshu' ben Yusef, of a little place called Gallilee, what we may call today "the sticks", or at least not in the 25 best places to live in Israel. Strictly blue-collar, and worse, many people were mixed with other races than Hebrew, something they did not like. The Samaritans, in particular, were historically outsiders and hated for many years as they were descendants of Assyrians, their enemies from history. Besides, they talked funny. They didn't even accept the prophetic books, as it denounced Assyrians, their ancestors.

Yeshu' bar Yusef (Who we know today as Jesus, Son of Joseph - the name "Yeshu'" can be spelled in several ways, as you have seen in this course: Yeshua, Yahshua, etc.) fulfilled the requirements of this Anointed One - something the others, before and since, did not do. These included:

- * Was the "seed of the woman" - since women do not carry the "seed" this was very strange
- * The Promised One, Star of Jacob, Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Son of David,
- * The Branch, the Vine, the Servant, the Cornerstone, High Priest of the Melchizedek order
- * To unite Jews and Gentiles, die for all, a King, a Priest, a Prophet,
- * Born in Bethlehem, bring eternal righteousness, Pierced, spit on, mocked, exalted
- * Rejected by the Jewish nation, Prince of Peace, Eternal Father,, Wonderful, Counselor
- * Did not decay in grave, have no broken bones, zealous, His clothes gambled for
- * Born of a virgin, taken to Egypt, executed with sinners, prayed for His enemies
- * Given a drink while dying, to be "Immanuel" - God with us, come with a New Covenant
- * Have a silent defense, sold, betrayed, abandoned, entered Jerusalem in triumph.

These, and many more, were the signs of the True Messiah, which Yahshua (Jesus) fulfilled. Many others claimed to be the Messiah, but did not fulfill these things that made it genuine.

68. Priests. In the Old Testament as well as the New, "priests" are mentioned, and are not what we today might think of when we hear this word. Priests of the Jewish religion were to serve Yahweh in His temple, to do these things:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. Offer sacrifices | f. test for leprosy |
| b. maintain sanctuary & temple | g. blow the trumpets a right times |
| c. Burn incense | h. carry the ark (box) of God |
| d. bless the people | i. teach the laws of God |
| e. purify the unclean | j. inspect areas & people |

These priests were from the family of Aaron, brother of Moses, and must not have any physical deformity. They were sort of a "heath department" as well.

The Levites were people from the family of Levi, son of Jacob. They acted as priests and were separate from the other 12 tribes of Israel, also musicians, teachers, soldiers, and judges. They were led by the "High Priest".

72. The Epistles . An epistle is a letter. Most of the New Testament "books" were originally letters, and because they were from a highly respected person and contained valuable information on theology, history, the Hebrew Scriptures ("Old Testament"), guidance and instruction, ordinances or "traditions" which were basically advice on how to operate a church and deal with various issues and problems, requests and some personal messages. Most were written by Saul of Tarsus, a Jewish Pharisee (Pawrishaw, or seperated ones), whom Yahshua had many arguments with because of their pride and stubbornness, putting their own traditions and desires above the Word of God, and most especially, their hypocrisy. They never realized that if the Son of God could humble Himself and become a man and live among us, they certainly could be more humble and not go around abusing their authority. Pharisees became enemies of not only Yahshua but His disciples and the church, and Saul in particular was "gung-ho" on causing them a great deal of trouble, and on a trip to Damascus to receive even more authority to cause even more trouble for the church, Yahshua Himself appeared to Him, knocked him off his "high horse" and blinded him to get his attention. Saul changed his name to Paul, or "little", because of this humbling experience, (and because it was common for Jews to have both a Hebrew and Roman name if they were Roman citizens), and soon became the strongest supporter of the Christian Church instead of its greatest enemy.

The earliest example of an epistle in the Bible was King David's letter to Joab in 2 Samuel 11. This did not constitute a "book" as they were regarded in the New Testament, but a brief note as part of a larger story, as in Acts 23:26-30. Usually Paul had someone else do the writing while he spoke, because of his bad eyesight. Sometimes an epistle had to deal with incorrect teachings or practices in the church, and the correct way was pointed out and emphasized. For example, gnosticism made some statements that were incorrect teachings that caused writers to state the correct doctrines clearly. The letters could be to a whole church or to a specific person, but they were treated with great respect and copied very carefully, unlike critic's claims that people "changed" them at will. There is no proof of this. Some of these epistles were lost, but the ones that have survived have always, for 2,000 years, been widely regarded as the Word of God, through one of His servants. Besides Paul, other epistles were written by Luke (whose gospel was his first letter, Acts it's continuation), Peter (Kepa or Shimon, in two letters), John (Yohannon, who also wrote his gospel and Revelation), and Jude (Yehuda, brother of Yahshua), plus James (Yamez, brother of Yahshua). The writer of the book of Hebrews did not identify himself, but it is thought that either Paul or Luke wrote it, because of the extremely detailed knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures they both possessed.

Like all of the other books, they do not contain only one thing, but all have some elements of history, prophecy, and literature. Archeology, history, and linguistics have supported the validity of these epistles.

Approximate time-line of the epistles:

c. 33ad					
Acts (by Luke) Pentecost		Peter's ministry to Jews	Paul's conversion	Paul & Barnabas	
		Steven's work	Philip's work		
45 James	45-53 Thessalon.	ROMANS 58 Galatians/Ephesians	62 Philimon 57-58 Corinthians	60 Peter I	65 Timothy 67-68 Titus 68
Paul's first trip (missionary journey) chapters 13-14		Council at Jerusalem (15)	Paul's second missionary journey (15-18)	Paul's third missionary (18-21)	Paul's arrest & trials
68 Hebrews Revelation 87-90 John's epistles c100 ad					

74. The Psalms. The book of Psalms (silent "P") is the largest book of the Bible, and approximately in the middle. It is 150 chapters long, some a few lines, some pages long. They were mostly written by King David, some by his son Solomon, some by others, over many years. So it is a collection with a wide variety, expressing nearly every possible emotion and need. Most are to, and/or about Yahweh-God, and both individuals and national relationships to Him. Some are in the form of a personal prayer, some speak for the nation of Israel as a whole. They are, at least in the Hebrew language, poetic in form and set to music. They are worth adapting for any Christian's personal use. Many are quoted in the New Testament, and some are prophetic, that is they spoke of things in the future, particularly the coming and acts of the promised Messiah, the Anointed One, Yahshua. They are generally divided into five parts, each part corresponding generally to the five books of the pentauch. These are used almost constantly in the Eastern Orthodox churches, and Bishops memorize all 150 of them, often in at least two languages. The Dead Sea Scrolls includes a few extra ones that the writers used in their private community.

75. The Proverbs. Right after the Psalms are the Proverbs, mostly from King Solomon. These include valuable advice on a wide variety of subjects, often on being careful not to fall into sin, especially adultery (something Solomon could have paid more attention to himself), contrasts between the good and wicked, wise and foolish, and the just and the unjust. Because it has been divided into 31 chapters, many people read one chapter per day, every day, and this helps to really ingrain this wisdom into one's mind. Much of it is very simple, but it is often the simple things that trip us up. Don't neglect this book in your Christian life.

76. The Pentauch. This is the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. Most were written by Moses, from older books on Genesis, the history of Israel, and the events in which he personally participated in - interactions with the Pharaoh of Egypt (the king), his brother Aaron, the very changable nature of the Hebrew people, the Laws given by Yahweh, their travels, their rebellions, the establishment of the priesthood and their duties, sacrifices and offerings, and establishing the foundations for a new nation under Yahweh, instead of the Pharaoh of Egypt and their gods and practices. The Ten Commandments are a permanent part of both Jewish and Christian life, although some Christians seem to think that they are optional or subject to change. The other 600 laws were for a specific purpose in the nation of Israel, not for everyone. The Moral law, condensed in the Ten Commandments, is the basis for the moral boundaries and attitudes that Yahweh-God wants us to follow. Many people absolutely hate this, and go out of their way to reject or change it. A good example of this is the irrational hostility to the presence of the Ten Commandments in different places. The very idea of someone, even God, telling them what they can and cannot do upsets them. They cannot resist changing at least one of them, all if possible, to express their rebellious attitude towards Yahweh-God. But if Adam and Eve could not follow their one law, it is not a surprise that 10 would be a problem for some people. The law is not "abolished", it was fulfilled in Yahshua the Messiah. That is, He followed each and every one of these in the way that they were supposed to be followed, not in the way the traditions of the Jewish leaders decided to do it, and because of this, we are to follow in His example, NOT the example of the Scribes and Pharisees, who always thought of ways to get around the inconvenience of God's laws with their traditions. Several examples of the Law of Hammurabi (an ancient king) are given in here, which differ from the Laws of Yahweh in several aspects, therefore they were not "stolen" by Moses just because of a few similarities.

78. The Prophetic Books. It will be no surprise to learn that prophetic books were generally written by prophets. This was not always the case, as many people had a scribe or person who wrote for them at dictation. Being able to write was a rather rare skill, and those who could were often employed by others for this purpose.

Prophets are also known as "seers", one who receives a vision, dream, or message from the spirit world, Yahweh or one of His angels, in the case of Israel. There are false prophets, then and now, and Yahweh gave us a simple criteria for telling the difference: Yahweh's true prophets will tell the truth and what they say will happen will actually happen! Any idiot can tell people what they want to hear - they call them politicians today. Generally, it means "spokesman" and representative.

These may or may not include persons that use divination, or fortune-telling methods in order to communicate with the spirit world. Because spirits do not have bodies, they have to have some form of medium which they can influence that the one doing the divining could interpret according to the rules of the process. Many things have been used for the divination process - cards, coins, shells, stones, parts of animals or people, clouds, plants, fish, birds, the wind, and many others. These are interpreters of omens, or natural phenomenon, that is supposed to carry a special meaning to the diviner.

Yahweh's prophets were usually called into service when the nation of Israel, or another, neighboring nation, was going astray and causing trouble. Specifically, if Israel was disobeying Yahweh and going astray, the prophet will warn them. Prophets sometimes had to do outrageous things in order to get people's attention and illustrate the message. If a neighboring country was mistreating Israel, Yahweh took it personally since they were after all His people, even if they may go astray. A prophet may be sent to them in order to warn them not to abuse the people of Yahweh. Israel gave reasons enough for Yahweh to allow the other nations to abuse them, without them doing it on their own.

At one time, there were schools for prophets, where they learned the laws of Yahweh and devoted themselves to prayer and study. Methods of divination were examined to determine if one or more would be suitable for use in communicating with the spirit world. Although occult practices were forbidden, many were studied so that they were recognized and known by the prophets in case of meeting with another person who claimed to be a seer or prophet, and may have real or imagined powers. And being given a vision or message once and actually occupying the office of a prophet are two different things. The gift and office of a prophet is a regular thing and a way of life.

John the Baptist (Yohannon) was considered the last of the Old Testament prophets. In the New Testament, the gift of prophecy was to unify and help the church.

Here is a general time-line of the prophets:

876 bc	853 bc	836	793	779	743				695	640
Elijah	Elisha	Joel	Jonah	Isaiah	Amos	Hosea	Micah	Obadiah	Nahum	Jeremiah
640		608	-	597		520		432		25-30 AD
Habakkuk	Zephaniah	Daniel	Ezekiel		Zechariah	Haggai	Malachi			John

81. Discernment. Hand in hand with watchfulness is discernment. People always like to say that we are not to judge, but discernment is a form of judgment that we must do. The people who say we are not to judge are usually ones whose sins make them feel very guilty and shameful, which is the idea. Yahshua tells us to "judge righteously", and in the process of doing so, we keep in mind that we will be judged in the same manner that we judged others.

Discernment is the idea of being able to tell the difference between one thing and another, even if they closely resemble each other, and it is easy (and lazy) to just regard them as the same. For example, watching TV is not a sin. But watching shows that inflame one's passions, inspire criminal or sinful activity, or reinforce the old, sinful ways and self could be an obstacle to Christian growth. So, in that sense, it is a sin. You may not go to "hell" for it, but it will stunt your spiritual growth.

It is not always easy to correctly discern what is good and acceptable to God and what will harm you, or others, spiritually. For example, you could perform a perfectly acceptable act that, if observed by some people, will give a negative impression of you and your conversion to Christianity, and prevent them from responding to the gospel, especially if you present it. It requires constant sensitivity to the Spirit of God within, which means also that you should daily pray and be filled with the Spirit of God and His Word.

82. Edifying. This just means to build, construct, reinforce, strengthen, enlarge, expand, improve, or protect. This could be anything from a tent, as in the middle east, to a mansion. Symbolically, it refers to the church or collectively the ones that believe in and accept the gospel of the Messiah Yahshua, and are spiritually a part of His Body. On a lesser scale, this can refer to the individual person within a larger body. It would include the ideas of beautifying, adorning, maintaining, to repair, make attractive, clean, polish, disinfect, fumigate, renew, and decorate. These things complete the process of "edifying", and apply to the spiritual building just like the physical ones.

This means that, when each new member enters and becomes part of the spiritual group of believers, and a local church, they carry with them baggage of the past, their past habits, lifestyles, sins, debts, fears, misconceptions, and so on. For example, a new believer might still smoke. In some churches, they have a smoking area, and a lot of people sneer at this, unless they realize that people can come there (and should) who may still be in bondage to certain things. The Bible does not tell us not to smoke, but in the process of "edifying", it harms others and gives a negative impression to those on the outside. So the new Christian has to learn to see things from the view of being part of a larger body and group, and realize that, like it or not, ready or not, they are a representative of the church.

This can apply to things like personal hygiene, substance abuse, provocative dress, excess adornments, the kinds of bumper stickers or T-shirts one wears, anti-Christian spiritual practices, art or decorations at home or at work, the kind of work done, and language. This analogy can further extend to the yard, garden, fence, neighborhood, visitors and passerby - think in both physical and spiritual areas!

83. "Sainthood". This is NOT the Catholic or Orthodox view of "sainthood", where the dead are floating around, keeping tabs on things on earth. No matter how good they were on earth, how many good deeds they did, sacrifices made, candles lit, times went to church, rules followed, the dead are dead till the resurrection.

The "saints" are living Christians who are actively living for Yahshua their Savior and Lord/Master. If one falls into sin and repents, they are still a "saint". Because we have the "righteousness of the Messiah" before God, we are, to Him, saints. This does not give us license to do whatever we want, but it should give us a powerful sense of obligation and responsibility to honor Him with our lives.

86. Intercession. This means praying for others on a regular basis. It can be part of a larger routine or the main focus of one's ministry. That is, God can make a person an Intercessor, or Prayer Warrior. This means that they do not just repeat prayers, but know all aspects of prayer, intercession, spiritual warfare, and Biblical examples of prayer and so on. They know how to fast and different times and situations in which to fast to accompany prayer. They know how to be "in the Spirit". They recognize times and opportunities that it is applicable. When they hear bad news, their first impulse is to pray. When there is a need, they think of how God will meet it. When a person has a problem, they know that prayer can and will help to solve it. Communion with God is a regular and desired thing, not a chore to rush through in order to catch a TV program in time. Not being able to spend time with God hurts them, and there is no such thing as an intercessor who considers prayer a five-minute necessary task that has to be done in order to think of one's self as a "good Christian". What I mean is it is from the heart, and time is rarely an obstacle! It is not unusual for intercessors to spend an hour or more on their knees in prayer, or to fast two or three days.

It is also one of the most ignored, neglected, overlooked, and underestimated jobs in the church. It is the powerplant of the Temple of God, and without it the entire body suffers. We all should spend time in prayer regularly, throughout our daily lives, but the job of an intercessor is the backbone of the Body of Christ. Imagine a body with no backbone! It is definitely that important. The fact that there are so many spineless churches and Christians tells us this. There is no doubt at all.

We do not always know how or what to pray for, but the Spirit of God does, and to the extent that we submit to Him, we are able to pray "in the Spirit", that is with the Spirit of Yahshua praying within us, even if we have no idea of what specifically it is we are praying about. This can be in a "spiritual language" or "tongues", or we might not say anything, but just remain in God's presence, allowing His Spirit to operate through us. It is one of the reasons many of the problems of the world are allowed to get as bad as they have, because of a neglect of spiritual warfare and doing the jobs that God has for us. God has put certain things under our control, and who knows how many people who thought that giving God one day a week, often an hour or two of that day, and most of that quite possibly more in social activities, was enough and they had done "their part" for God! When someone asks, "If God is so great, why did He let this or that tragedy happen?", we might say, at least some of the time, it was not God's fault, but a number of Christians who were supposed to pray about it and take authority over the evil spirits involved that decided that a video game or movie was more important. I'm just saying, you know, maybe. Think about it!

87. The Tabernacle. When the Bible talks about "the Tabernacle", it usually means the enormous tent-like structure that Moses was told to build after the people of Israel were brought out of slavery in Egypt. It had various compartments and functions, for the service of the priests, worship of the people, and sacrifices to Yahweh. The three main parts were the outer court, the holy place, and the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies). This was replaced by the Temple of Yahweh later. It was a portable structure suitable for a nomadic people!

A tabernacle or tent is also a metaphor for the church, body of Messiah, or the physical human body. Like the original tabernacle of Moses, it is portable, temporary, and symbolic of something better in the future. As the Spirit of Yahweh met with the High Priest in the Holy of Holies, the Spirit of Yahweh meets with us in our heart, or innermost being. The Holy Place is the rest of our body, and our environment is the court area. In the same manner, we have to take care of this temple or tabernacle.

89. The Christian Family. God instituted the family after He made humans - a male and female adult - in Adam and Eve's case, they could not "leave their parents" to join together, as they had no human parents, but God made it so that from then on, the pattern was that:

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother
and be united to his wife, and the two will be one flesh;
so they are no longer two, but one. There fore what God
has joined together, let no man separate."

This is quoted more than any other Old Testament Scripture in the New Testament, as it is a very important analogy to Yahshua Messiah and His church and Body. It is the foundation for the human family and the reason that divorce has very few exceptions and allowances. God never had a "no-fault" divorce law.

God made us humans to have the apparatus and drive to "be fruitful and multiply", (as one person pointed out, one of the few things humanity takes seriously in the Bible) and propagate the species. But He also designed it so that it is done in a controlled and carefully regulated manner. We are not supposed to go "hog wild" and just do whatever strikes your fancy. We are above the animals, and should not act like them. There are both physical and spiritual aspects and affects of sexual activity, and these have to be taken into account when one marries. That is, it is just one small part of the union, not simply license to have sex legally before God.

Matrimony is the basis of the marriage covenant. So it is a contract between a man, woman, and God, and the human, civil laws should be conformed to as well. The basics are, they will remain loyal to one another and not have sex with another person after this marriage takes place. They pledge to meet each others' physical, emotional, and spiritual needs on the earth, and not break up simply because they decide they want to try something different. So their love will necessarily have to be strong enough to withstand the vicissitudes and trials and tribulations of life, the ups and downs, and make an effort worth speaking of ~~to~~ make the commitment work, as God is part of the deal, and God has to be considered in every aspect of the relationship.

Although a man and a woman, equal spiritually before God and Yahshua, they may have different roles, functions, strengths, weaknesses, duties, and gifts. They are, while on earth, still two different persons in two different bodies, and obviously can and do operate independently. The difference is that they should be able to rely upon each other to meet various needs of theirs. They should communicate on the deepest level possible, being aware that before God, their spirits are bonded together. that is why adultery is an exception (or fornication - sex with another being: adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, incest), because if the offended party wishes, they can have grounds for divorce because their spouse introduced another sexual partner that contaminates the relationship, possibly physically (with diseases) and spiritually (in joining another being's spirit with theirs). The offended spouse does not have to divorce, and they have to be willing to reconcile and heal.

The husband is generally the "head of the house" in the same way that Yahshua is the Head of the Church. This is not always a position to covet or desire, since it carries with it great responsibility. This is generally an executive role, although they both share the executive, decision-making, and rule-establishing duties. The wife should be aware of, and support, the actions and decisions of the husband. At all times, they should be aware of being ruled by Yahshua Messiah, and Scripture, prayer, and mutual love and honor, trust and respect, be the basis for their relationship. When the Bible talks about how one should "submit to one another", the part about the man submitting to the woman is usually ignored or misunderstood, and probably should be thought of as to "cooperate willingly" than what we think of today as "submission".

As the vows state, it is not something to do impulsively but after a great deal of counsel, prayer, thought, discussion, and communication with all involved. An experienced and skilled clergy can help prepare a couple, which ideally should be over the space of a year or more.

91. The "Lost Books of the Bible". As mentioned in lesson 90, the leaders of the local churches had to get together and decide out of all of the many writings claiming to be "true" words of God, or Yahshua, or whomever, which ones were genuine and which were a bunch of garbage. Predictably, most of them were garbage. Someone thought they could make a quick buck (or shekel, I guess) claiming to have found the secret book of Saint Peter's laundryman or whatever.

Some of these are useful in some of the historical and cultural information that they provide, and some may have a little bit of inspirational value. But for the most part, after you have read the genuine article, the real thing, and know it, when some bizarre stories come along and try to tell you about Yahshua as a boy, losing His temper and killing a fellow-playmate, then feeling sorry and resurrecting him, or making clay birds and bringing them to life, it just doesn't seem to be the same Person. Could it be true? Sure. Just like it is possible that the gods came from planet Nibiru and turned apes into humans to work as slaves so the gods could have gold. It is possible, but that doesn't mean it is true.

God already gives us more than any person can learn in the Bible that we have, and as I mentioned before, most people don't read the one we have. So why are people complaining about the so-called "Lost books"? People like controversy and conspiracies, which is why the tabloid business makes millions of dollars a year. As soon as the novels about the Da Vinci Code and Angels & Demons came out, everyone wanted to believe that they were true, and not NOVELS that Mr. Dan Brown MADE UP. That's why they were called NOVELS. But they were so well-written that they could be taken as fact, and did inspire people to study and think a little, and don't forget the other 20 or thirty books written for and against the idea and premises of the Da Vinci Code.

Is it possible that Yahshua was married to Mary Magdalene? Sure. In fact it was more unusual for a Rabbi to NOT marry than to do so. Further, I don't see what the big deal is. The Catholic church has promoted the ideas that both Yahshua and His mother Mary were always virgins, and that has stuck with nearly everyone to a point that suggesting that Yahshua had brothers and sisters, and was possibly married and -- ! God forbid, had children, seems outrageous. But it is not. I mean, so what. What difference does it really make? Does it change even one of the Bible's important teachings? NO. So again, What's the big deal? Other than the traditional view that the Catholic church has promoted (with no scriptural basis whatsoever) for years?

92. Witnessing. In this context, it means to offer the gospel to people who might be open to it. It can be preaching, or it can be passing or leaving "tracts" with the gospel message on it for people to pick up and read if they wish. It could be having a conversation with a person once an opportunity arises that leads to the subject in a (preferably) non-confrontational or argumentative manner. Arguing and witnessing do NOT work very well together. It is probable that NO ONE has ever sincerely accepted the Gospel of Yahshua through arguing. It certainly wasn't the way Yahshua did things. And since we are supposed to follow His example, we should not do it either.

Emotions can however get pretty intense about religion and politics, which is why many people do not discuss such matters. One has to go out of their way to be aware of the emotions involved with all persons, since many people have been taught from childhood to stick up for their religion, even if they don't follow it or even really believe it. Some imagine that their God or saints or angels are watching and recording with approval the brownie points racked up every time they argue or even physically fight over something someone says that they disagree with.

A person witnessing has to know the ~~g~~gospel and related matters well, and be "prayed up" (to use a Christian term) and be ready to be led by God's Spirit to say and do what is appropriate. No one comes to God the Father unless they are drawn by the Spirit, to try to drag them, kicking and screaming, into the kingdom does not work. But it is just a matter of being aware of opportunities God puts in your path. Then it is a matter of presenting the gospel in a way they can understand.

94. Outline of Church History. Obviously, 2,000 years of history is going to be hard to squeeze into a sheet of paper, without leaving things out that should be included, so I'm not really going to try. I will, however, give the student the perspective to have in reading about church history in general. It is important to be as unbiased as you can so that your mind is not diverted from reality.

ALL historians have their biased views, some more than others. I've seen where people have torn pages out of books or destroyed the book entirely because the author was not saying things that the reader felt should be said, or said things they didn't want said. People take their religions, and non-religions, seriously, and treat their pet religious or non-religious institutions like parents. Some churches still teach kids to "stick up for" their church, even engage in physical violence, because God or Jesus or Mary or some celestial fauna or another is looking down and counting brownie points. This gives kids a distorted and twisted perspective from a very early age, and sticks with them through life. They don't care if they are following the teachings of Jesus (Yahshua), or even know them, but want their young people to have a self-serving militant attitude to protect a religious institution. God, being God, does NOT need our "help", and can defend Himself quite well without us acting psychotic if someone expresses an opinion different than ours.

Most arguments about church (or any other) history is a matter of whose historical record one is willing to believe. It comes down to, "My history book was written by a better historian than your history book". Unless you are discussing history with someone who is basically an uneducated lout who just likes to argue, you are going to find that this is true. The winners, if that is what they can be called, are usually the ones who write the "history", and an unbiased view is rare. In ancient Egypt and other places, for example, the records of previous kings were eradicated and the new king was given credit for everything good. The enemies were blamed for everything bad. This is the pattern that is still followed today. "Historical records" were altered according to the whims and desires of the current rulers, and everything else destroyed.

During a time in history in which nearly all of Europe was ruled by the Catholic church, the population was kept as ignorant and dependent as possible, and there was no need for Bibles as a result. Many Bibles were routinely burnt and anyone doing anything differently was reported dutifully to the church authorities for their brownie points and hope for more lenient treatment by same! The Protestant reformation had its good points, but some bad as well, and Europe had at one time three main groups, the Catholics, Lutherans, and the Calvinists, fighting one another, or banding together and fighting the third at times. Actual Christians were usually on the receiving end of persecution, torture, and death from all three, The Islamic invasions could have helped, not hurt, Europe, if it was used as a way to unite Christianity against a common foe.

When one looks at the example of Yahshua Messiah and His apostles, and how they had established the church in the Bible, and the way things were done later, one can see the obvious differences. Most churches claim that they follow the Bible "precisely" as one said, but obviously do not. When most people refer to "Church History", they have been taught that means Roman Catholic church history, which is NOT the case. The catholic church has been trying, and usually succeeding, in convincing the world that they are the "original" and genuine church, which is clearly not the case. They tried to kill and discredit anyone else's viewpoint to a point of over 70 million people victimized by their "inquisitions", and the fear of losing one's salvation due to it supposedly being in the control of priests and popes. It is GOD'S heaven, and if He decides to let someone in, the church has nothing to say about it.

No church or religious organization is perfect. You will find that, as the Bible says we are all sinners and come short of the glory of God. Yahshua said that we will be able to tell who is a genuine representative of His church by their "fruits", or their behavior. Clearly, people who feel it is God's will to go around killing people "for God" are not Christians, no matter how much they jump up and down and scream they are, in fact, Christian! Let me make this as clear as humanly possible: ANY IDIOT CAN CALL THEMSELVES A CHRISTIAN.

95. Biblical Geography. This is a very brief overview of where some of the places of the Bible are, then and now.

Sumer. This is the land of southern Iraq today. It has also been called Babylon, Chaldea, Mesopotamia, Nineveh, Assyria, Ur, Nippur, Lagash, and other names, depending on what kingdom was in power at the time. Assyria, Akkad, Nineveh, etc. are in the northern part of today's Iraq, and are not always considered together with Sumer, or "Shumer", as it is in the Bible: land of bushes.

Elam. This is today's Iran. It was also called Persia by the Greeks, and part of the dual kingdoms of the Medes and the Persians of the Bible. Susa, or Shusha, is also mentioned as a city of that land. It is east of Iraq. Both are connected to the Persian/Arabian Gulf, leading to the Indian Ocean. Iran means "nobles".

Palestine. This is the area in which the nation of Israel settled. It is on the far eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This is the same as "Philistia" in the Bible, land of the Philistines. It was formerly called Canaan, possibly low or sunken land, as a meaning. This was the land promised to Abraham and his family. The land is centered upon Jerusalem, "city of peace", one of the most blood-soaked lands on earth. The Jewish people and Arabs, descendants of the Philistines, are still fighting over it.

Phoenicia. This generally means the land connecting the Mediterranean Sea with the Lebanon mountains. It was sometimes called Canaan, or Kinachna, or by the people themselves Chna. (this was a hard "K" sound as these languages did not have our "ch" sound, as in "church") It is a Greek word for dark red, after the dye they made there. The word "Phoenix" may have come from here. The people originally came from the east. Part of the ancient land contains today's Beirut (Biruta) and Arvad at the north. The famous cities of Tyre and Sidon are included here, Sidon often representing the whole nation (as "Sidonians").

Syria. Thought to be an abbreviation of Assyria, of north Iraq, or "Suri", the name in Babylon. The people here were of Aram, or Arameans, where we get the name of their language, Aramaic, which was spoken by Yahshua and His apostles! It contains the famous cities of Damascus (possibly one of the oldest cities on earth still around), Antioch (often mentioned in the Book of Acts), Hama, Biblos, Aleppo, Palmyra, and Carchemish. Another name used for this was Aram-naharaim, or Aram of the rivers. This is why the Aramaic language is also called "Syriac".

Jordan. Today a country, in the Bible more famous for the river named for it. It was also called "Transjordan", and became Jordan in 1949 ("The Hashemite Kingdom"). It includes the extremely ancient city of Jericho (IriHo, city of the moon-god) and Petra, an ancient stone-city. The river of this name figures prominently in the Bible.

Egypt. Also "Mizraim" or "Massree", in Hebrew and Arabic. This was also called the land of Ham, one of the sons of Noah. The name Egypt is Greek for gift of the Nile river. This is on the north-east coast of Africa on the Mediterranean Sea. It was also called the "Two lands", as it was often divided into the Upper Kingdom (south) and the Lower Kingdom (to the north). The whole culture was centered on the Nile river and the seasonal cycles of its ebbing and flowing, according to the star Sothis (Sirius the Dog-Star), or a "Sothic cycle" of 1460 years. Their gods were many and often centered upon these two main elements of their life. During the Exodus, Yahweh made a point to do things to Egypt that their gods were supposed to be able to control, to demonstrate His superiority. It was also called "Kemet" or Khemet after the fertile black soil near the Nile, as opposed to "desheret", or desert, the reddish land.

Arabia. This is a huge peninsula, the Sinai and Syrian desert. These are split into Arabia Petraea, Arabia Deserta, Arabia Felix. It extends into the Persian/Arabian Gulf. It means "Steppe". Today it contains not only Saudi Arabia but Yemen, Oman, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. The island kingdom of Bahrain is there also.

Lebanon. This means "white". It is what was partially Phoenicia and Syria. It is characterized mainly by its mountains.

Armenia. This is a former Soviet "satellite" in the mountain range of Ararat, where Noah's ark landed. This was north of Assyria, and often called Ararat.

97. The Meanings of Numbers. This is not in reference to the Bible book called "Numbers". Numbers can mean a lot of things, but in the Bible, they have several symbolic meanings. For example:

1. One refers to a unity, a singularity, or a beginning. The first time certain things are mentioned in the Bible can be significant. The statement that Yahweh-God is One is often ignored or misunderstood. Most Christians have been taught to think of God as "three", and to consider anyone who says different, even the Bible, evidently, as heretical and misled, possibly a cult member. God is the ultimate expression of Oneness, and the only Entity in the universe deserving the title, "God".
2. This number is that of balance, contrasts, comparisons, and differences. It is the basis of polarity - light and darkness, day and night, sun and moon, male and female. It can mean opposition or friction, division, or harmony.
3. Three balances two. Three is the synthesis of the two in conflict. It is the number of resurrection. It is the number of the triangle.
4. This is the number of the earth and earthly things, creation, and this world. It is the number of the square.
5. Five represents the grace of God. The four of the earth plus the Creator's blessing: "It is good". It figures prominently in the measurements of the tabernacle. It is the number of the pentagon.
6. The six is the number of humanity, created on the sixth day, to interact as a 3-fold being with the Divine three-fold being. That is, humanity as a spirit, soul, and body interacting with the Creator as a Holy Spirit, Divine Mind, and Embodiment. He relates to us as a Father, a Son, and through the Holy Spirit. We relate to one another in psychological terms as Parent, Adult, and Child. Hence the "Star of David". It is also the number of work, labor, and 24-hour days divided by 6.
7. Spiritual perfection. It began as a seal of creation, the "crown" of the seventh day on the perfect work of creation. This is a "3" plus a "4". Seven refers to the seventh day, the sabbath, the gift of God to humanity to rest and "recharge" and devote to Him. Seven is also prominent in the life-cycles of creation.
8. This means regeneration, resurrection, and renewal. It refers to a new beginning, after a cycle of 7 is completed. It is connected with various names of Deity, God's people, and God's works.
9. In scripture, a final or permanent judgment. It is a mystic number with many unique qualities.
10. This is similar to #8, a new beginning after a cycle of 9. It is the number of law.
11. Discord, disorder, and disorganization. Yahshua's disciples after Judas' betrayal.
12. Governmental completeness. Two sixes, four threes. Tribes of Israel, Apostles, signs of the Zodiac, and divisions of time. Order & orderly process.
13. Rebellion, rejection, and revolution.
17. Spirit and order (10 + 7).

The "Perfect numbers" are 3, 7, 10, and 12, whose product is 2,520, the number of "chronological perfection" (7 x 360).

This was based mostly on the work of E. Bullinger in his Companion Bible. He has a separate work focused completely on this, called Number in Scripture, Ethelbert W. Bullinger.

100. The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. This is a long, elaborate service used in Orthodox churches worldwide, and rarely known in Protestant churches. Some Catholic churches might use it. It is the traditional weekly service in which the Orthodox churches celebrate communion together on the first day of the week and the celebration of the resurrection. The liturgy can take up to two hours to complete, one of the drawbacks to the traditional services. The priest's sermon alone can be an hour. "Pack a lunch", one person said.

The service is very interactive, and has places for responsive readings and replies as the priest prays, times to stand, kneel, and perform the sign of the cross. This sign is to reinforce the concept of the trinity (thumb and pointer and middle fingers of right hand together) and the double nature of the Messiah (ring and pinky fingers folded down), and teaches us to invoke the Godhead in times of need.

Orthodox churches are usually adorned with icons of various types, but not statues. Nearly every part of an Eastern Orthodox church has some symbolic and instructional value, including the clothing of the priests. Prayers are regularly made for all of the clergy and persons who actively serve God, civil authorities, our armed forces, the sick and suffering, our families, those with whom we work and share entertainment, the lost and rebellious towards God, captives and prisoners, orphans and widows, the poor and they who need daily support, missionaries and Christians under persecution, and our own place in the Body of Messiah, that we would be a good example and become worthy to enter the kingdom of God.

Traditionally, when the call, "The Doors" is made, this is not in reference to an old rock band, but the fact that non-Christians are not allowed to partake in the Body of Messiah in the form of the bread in communion. Non-Believers are not part of Messiah thus should not share in His body. Once non-Christians are allowed to leave, the creed is recited, so that all present are "on the same page" as far as shared beliefs are concerned - the Apostle's Creed specifically that states that the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father, not the Father "and the Son" (that little detail helped split the Catholic and Orthodox churches for centuries). Then all reflect upon their sins and confess them to God, often using Psalm 51 (#50 in some Orthodox Bibles). The communion is prepared, usually bread baked then stamped with a special stamp to indicate it is used for Orthodox worship. This would be a square, with a cross, dividing the letters (in Greek) "ICXC" and "NIKA". This basically means that Yahshua Messiah (Jesus Christos) is our Victory (Nika), over sins and death. The bread is divided up on the Holy Paten, for the "ALL-HOLY", "the Lamb", "the nine orders", and at the bottom, "the living and the dead". The nine orders are the divisions of angels. The bread is called the "prosfora".

Prayers are also made for the dead, which not everyone likes. After all, the dead are actually DEAD, right? But I have thought about it and concluded that, we should be able to pray for those who have passed on to the next level, for their next stop will be resurrection and then judgment. And who doesn't need extra prayer for those events. If we will be judged by God after our resurrection, we might need all the prayer we can get. We should not however wait for someone to die before praying for them.

The choir, as a rule, has a major part in responsive interaction with the priest during services. That is, they don't just sing to entertain. What they sing is a main part of the service. Some prayers only the priest uses, and some everyone does. A full copy of the whole liturgy is available, however.

A great deal can be learned from the divine liturgy of the Orthodox church, and all protestants should experience it. It is a form of Christian worship that dates back to the very early years of the Christian church, and valuable for that reason if no other. The important thing is that all things are done "decently and in order", not made up as one goes along, as in some churches. Being led by the Spirit is one thing, but this never means that spontaneity leads to confusion and disorganization. There has to be a balance in all things.

LESSON ONE IN DETAIL

The Gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 St. Paul spells out the Gospel while writing to the Church in Corinth, Greece. It involves: The death of the Messiah Yahshua for our sins, His burial, His rising from the dead on the third day. In verses 3 & 4: "Messiah died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day according to the scriptures..." He went on to describe how Yahshua appeared to others, once before over 500 witnesses.

In verse 1, he introduces the subject and context, the "Gospel" that he had preached to them, that they accepted, and held to this belief, and thus are saved by it...if they keep his words in mind, that they were not "converted in vain", that is, after their initial salvation, lose it after all of his efforts. If they hadn't followed through with their conversion (by belief & acceptance of the Gospel) by also living converted lives, as "born-again" persons should, it would be in vain.

It is also called: the "Gospel of God" (Romans 1:1), the "Gospel of Grace" (Acts 20:24), the "Gospel of Peace" (Ephesians 6:15), the "Gospel of the Messiah" (2 Corinthians 2:12), the "Gospel of the Kingdom" (Matthew 24:14), the "Word of truth, the Gospel of your Salvation" (Ephesians 1:13), and the "Glorious Gospel of the Messiah" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

"If our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost, to those in this world whose minds have been blinded by God, because they did not believe, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of the Messiah, Who is in the Likeness of God, should shine on them".

The Gospel is for everyone, but everyone will not accept it. It still should be offered and presented properly. I imagine millions of people who would have been open to the Gospel message have been repelled by anything associated with it due to personalities and religious dogma, traditions, legalism, hypocrisy, and other things that people use as an excuse to reject the real thing. Some people have been brought up in such a way that the very idea of accepting Yahshua as a Lord and Savior is out of the question. Some people actually believe that what one person does, or a group of people do, stands for everyone with the same type of general association. Atheists may be so ingrained in their atheism that it is impossible to communicate to them, and only God could do so. (it is also impossible to convince them of how "religious" they are in their atheism!) A couple of very overbearing, intolerably religious people of the Plymouth Brethren sect drove their son away from the gospel to the point where he became "the wickedest man in the world", Aleister Crowley. A hypocritical Lutheran family drove their son from the Gospel to a point where he started world communism - Karl Marx. An extremely domineering Catholic family had so molded the mind of their son that his very name is synonymous with evil: Adolph Hitler. This is not typical, of course, but these are a few of many examples of how one's upbringing can lay the foundation for difficulties in accepting the True Gospel message.

There is also a current movement of atheists who try to blame religion and the belief in God for all of the evils of the world. They do not seem to explain the many evils of atheistic groups (whether the one led by Madylin Murray-O'Hair or communist countries who attempt to eradicate religion altogether) and countries and cannot blame "religion" for their savagery or backwardness. Pseudo-intellectualism has never been able to overcome the ingrained spiritual need of humanity to be re-connected with God. True Christianity is an experience, and to demand that it be stuck in a test tube and viewed under a microscope is idiotic. "Religion" is only ways of humans to make sense of the unknown and rituals for appeasing that which they perceive as God or other spirits.

LESSON TWO SUPPLIMENT

Faith.

You must have faith in order to please God. That is not all that pleases Him, nor is it all you need, but it is a beginning. Modern science, archeology, linguistics, history, anthropology, and other things support a great deal of what the Bible says, and the more advanced we become, the more support the Bible and its message becomes. Yet, this is not enough for many people, whose religion is their own mind and intellect and their faith in their education and knowledge. Even if every single thing in the Bible had scientific evidence to support it, people like this will still not believe. This, faith, seems to be today's real "missing link".

Faith without works is dead, St. James says. This means that in order to demonstrate that your faith is genuine and sincere, your behavior will change for the better. You are not saved by doing good or refraining from doing bad, but it is evidence that your faith in the Gospel of Jesus (Yahshua) is real. If a person claims to believe in a God yet behaves like an evil person, his faith is meaningless. That is what demons do - demons know very well that God exists, but they do not act better as a result. Demons know better than any human in the existence of God, yet are still evil.

The only thing that astonished Jesus (Yahshua) is how great or how weak people's faith could be. I speculate that it is not easy to astonish Jesus with anything, but the Bible tells us that these two things did it. He tells us that if we have faith as small as a mustard seed - the smallest seeds they knew of - they could do great things. Being compared to a small seed also tells us that symbolically, faith may take time to mature and grow, and that its results may not be evident for a while.

Faith is belief, trust, and reliance upon someone or something, but it is also an aspect of our spiritual self. Intellectual faith is just assuming that something is true and consistent. If we study science, and learn science from a textbook, we are making the assumption that what is in the book is factual and reliable, and that the writer(s) also are reliable and trustworthy, and indirectly that whatever they have studied, and those whom they have learned from, were also reliable.

By the same token when we study the Bible and learn from teachers of the Word, we also are exercising a certain amount of faith. We must believe that there is a God that makes reading the Bible relevant and more than a storybook, and that He inspired the writers to write what they did. "Holy men of God", St. Peter wrote, "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit". Men that had a real, spiritual relationship with God through their faith, prayer, worship, and study received things from Him that God wants us to know. Because this message is so important to both God and humanity, God made sure that this message, centered around the Gospel and Person of Jesus Christ (Yahshua m'shikha) was not lost. The Bible has been attacked directly and indirectly, over many years by many people in many ways, yet still survives and prospers. Many people have predicted that the Bible would be forgotten once human's "science" reached a level where everything was "explained" and understood to not be from a Creator, but the operation of natural phenomenon. This will never happen.

As a spiritual operation, faith is one of the "fruits" of the Spirit of God. It is one of the things that the human spirit can do to relate to the spiritual world and its inhabitants. If we do not have enough faith, God can and will bless us with more. Or God can bless us with the gift of faith, so that we will regularly use our faith to allow God to work through us on a regular basis.

Faith is also common and unified. That is, the faith of several people focused upon the same thing tends to have more power than the faith of one person alone. The common faith is generally the Gospel which all Christians believe in and trust for their salvation and way of life. With this common faith, we have fellowship with one another and thus have the use of collective faith.

There is also false faith. Some people claim to believe and their actions prove otherwise. Some people want to receive the benefits of fellowship with Christians and

LESSON THREE SUPPLIMENT

Confession.

Confession has a number of meanings today. Police and social workers make some big deal of making people confess, and lawyers think of ways to get around such confessions once their clients blabbed. But confession does not always have this rather sinister meaning. Nor does it mean going to a church and confessing sins to a priest. The first meaning does, in fact, mean that we are to confess and realize their blame and their responsibility in the choices they have made and actions or reactions that we have performed or allowed, being aware of the ramifications and possible consequences. Others may have been participants, or instigators, or nearly completely to blame for an event, they may have coerced you, blackmailed you, frightened you, threatened you, begged you, guilt-tripped you, or whatever, but you have to acknowledge whatever part you yourself played in a sin. You cannot fool God, even if you can fool every other living creature in the universe, so if you are going to come clean at least come clean with God.

Psalms 51 is the classic standard example of confession and repentance to God, where one had sinned with full knowledge of its wrongness and the results of their actions and inactions. Afterwards, a prophet of God was sent to him, King David, to point out the sin, which he was trying to forget. His conscience tormented him until he had to confess to God and beg forgiveness. Being so used to fellowship with God, not having it was painful to him. It does not generally bother sinners who have no relationship with God and therefore do not miss it.

This usually consists of a verbal statement, but not always. Priests are often used as they have strict rules on confidentiality and respect of one's privacy, but originally it was expected that any mature Christian could be trusted with one's confession. This is rather dangerous today, where many Christians would not hesitate to tell the police or otherwise gossip about their sins or crimes, and happily get them into trouble, self-righteously imagining that this is "God's will" and therefore they are doing "the will of God" in the process. Some even carry the charade to the extent of thinking that getting others into trouble is their "ministry"! They become professional rats, and fantasize about some crown in heaven awaiting them, and no doubt, a gold plating for their tail.

St. James told us to "confess our sins one to another", and this could still be done, with these admonitions in mind. Use your brains. If it is God's will that you go to jail or otherwise be punished by humans for your sins or crimes, then that, undoubtedly, is what is going to happen. It is a horrible statement about today's "Christians" who can hardly be trusted with a fellow-Christian's problems without a great risk of it being spread all over town. It doesn't always happen, but it is not by any means unheard of. Be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

Confession also means that you can state to others that you are a Christian, that you believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that you are "born-again" into the family of God, that Jesus, ☉ Yahshua, is your Lord and Savior, that He died for your sins and rose again the third day, went to heaven and is interceding with God the Father for you, and will one day return. As someone once said, if being a Christian were a crime, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Confession is instrumental in forgiveness, pardon, fellowship, healing, and salvation. Some people cannot do it. Just saying, "I was wrong, it was my fault, I am to blame" is like getting them to wrestle a lion. Fear, pride, persecution, false teachers and Christians, and legal consequences gets in the way of the first kind. Fear of ridicule or high expectations of behavior which they do not believe they can meet, consistently, can hinder the second. Once one announces they are a Christian, whatever the mental images of the hearers may be are brought into the fore front, and a person is expected to behave in various ways, the failure of which to do so causes more pressure and lack of credibility. Many people watch and

LESSON FOUR SUPPLIMENT

Repentance.

Repentance is to reject, turn away from, get rid of, abandon, give up on, and discard, in particular, one's sins. Imagine the same feelings you have for something that you have rejected, and transfer it to some of the things that you may do that is not pleasing to God. Sin is called "dead works" because they do not contribute to your spiritual well-being and growth. They do not contribute to life, in the way God speaks of life: "life and better yet, abundant life". Existence is one thing, we did nothing to earn it and merely found ourselves existing in this world. We had become conscious of ourselves and our individual identity over time, and now that we have found ourselves here, existing, we learn that there is a God and that, being a supremely holy Being, wants to have a friendship with us, but there is something in the way. This is our sins.

Then the solution is obvious. Since God is not going to lower His standards for us or anyone else, nor could He, we have to give up those things that will cause a break in the fellowship and friendship between Him and us. God actually WANTS a friendship with us humans, as we are in His image and He can relate to us on this level. Because of the intrinsic connection and resemblance to Him, He wants to interact with us. But there is always the matter of Him being holy and us being sinful. There is no other way to get around that. He would no longer be God if He lowered His standards.

As acting within the worldly realm, and as a human being Yahshua, He demonstrated that a human being can live with others and on earth without participating in their sins. He set an example for us that showed that it is possible to live IN the world, but not be OF it. He did not allow the world's ways to control and dictate how He behaved. It wasn't easy, but for our sakes, if not for His own, He kept the connection with His Father-God at all times by not sinning, although He was tempted in all ways, but did not sin. If He had sinned, not only would He have broken His connection with God, but He could no longer be our Savior. He could no longer give His blood for our sins, as it would not be pure, but tainted with His sin.

Living a sin-less and perfect life was not in the least easy, with all of the temptations and opportunities Yahshua had on earth, with His spiritual knowledge and insights, He could have at that time brought the kingdom of heaven to earth, like most of His followers thought He was going to do. This would have seemed ideal, and even today people wonder why He didn't bring in the kingdom, like He said He would, since He was human. There are several reasons for this.

Our first need, above all, was forgiveness of sins. More than anything else us humans needed, and still need today, it is forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with a holy God, and the beginning of a spiritual relationship. He healed, raised dead, walked on water, fed thousands, and much more, but that was only a temporary solution to a bigger problem. The sick became well, but still could get sick again; the dead He raised died again anyway. The people He fed got hungry again. These were short-term acts of mercy and love, and to demonstrate His submission to and allowance of God's Spirit to operate through Him as a human being.

The bigger problem was the universal need of humanity to be aware of their state of sinfulness and separation from God, and that they could obtain forgiveness from sin, and therefore have friendship with God. Not only for those who lived at that time, but for all humanity, even today.

As a human being Yahshua could help a relatively few people for a relatively short time, in a relatively limited geographical area, but as a resurrected being, returned to divinity, He could help all who believe in Him and give up their sins that remain an obstacle to His relationship to us.

Once we believe in the Gospel of Yahshua and accept Him into our lives, and can verbally state (confess) that He is our Lord and Savior and we believe and accept His death, burial, and resurrection in our place, and His blood as payment for our sins

LESSON FIVE IN DETAIL

Baptism into water was not an unusual practice in the middle east, and was commonly used to initiate a new member into a religious society. The baptism John the Baptizer did was "unto repentance", which meant that it indicated publically that a person had turned away from their sins and was preparing themselves for the arrival of the Messiah. When Yahshua arrived, He made a point to be baptized as part of His example He was setting for us to follow. The word "baptism" refers to putting someone or thing into another medium, such as water. It means "immersion" or "submersion", to dip, plunge, sink. The practice of sprinkling, splashing, pouring, spraying, or other methods of non-baptism were not used until later, when the church felt it necessary to have alternative ways of doing things due to illness and persecution.

Whether a person's method of baptism is acceptable to God is up to God. God knows our hearts and knows that the act is not a "bath"; it is an act of faith that they are obeying God through baptism to demonstrate the sincerity of their repentance. No one can see repentance, therefore John the Baptist told those who wanted to go through the act of baptism for show to demonstrate the fact that they have repented of their sins through changing their behavior. The show of being dunked was not enough for John, who could tell what was going on.

He then said that, compared to the One Whom he was preparing people to receive, he was insignificant. It was necessary to point this out since many Jews had begun to build a personality cult around John, and they were missing the point of his only being the forerunner, not the One to come, the Messiah. When Paul the Apostle went to Ephesus, he found people still following the way of John the Baptizer, and had to be re-baptized in the name of Yahshua to receive the Holy Spirit. They were not wrong, their information was incomplete. They were baptized into repentance already, according to John's baptism, so being baptized into the name of Yahshua was important enough to re-do the ritual, correctly.

Repentance is only part of the reason for being baptized in Yahshua's name. That is why it is different from John's, and had to be repeated. When one repents, that is fine and good for living under the legal system of Israel, for following the laws of Yahweh in order to earn salvation. When one believes the Gospel of Yahshua and as a result repents from their sins, they are then baptized in water to show not only that repentance but faith in the Gospel. To do so "in the name of Yahshua" needs some explanation and is a very bitterly contested matter in the church.

Generally, to do or say something "in the name" of someone is to do so in the same manner in which they would say or do it, with their authority, permission, and approval for same. One acts "in the name" of another, legally, in that they act as that person's agent and representative. When one is baptized "in the name of Yahshua", you are first showing that you are following His example He set when He was baptized. When someone baptizes another person "in the name of Yahshua", they are baptizing in His place, as if Yahshua Himself were doing so.

There however is more to this. To be baptized in His name is more importantly to legally take His name upon yourself. You become adopted into His family, and become part of His body, the church. Salvation is through His name, which itself means the Salvation of Yahweh. This is the Name Above All Names, the Name at which every knee will bow in heaven and earth, and everyone will finally admit, no matter what arguments they have had against accepting Him, that Yahshua is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and everything that the Father-God is in a form in which we can relate to and understand.

Now the subject comes up regarding Matthew 28:19: Yahshua is telling His apostles to go, make disciples for Him from all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Is this one of those "contradictions" people keep talking about? No, of course not. When one understands the whole concept involved, and the big arguments that people had over the nature of the Godhead, it becomes clear. The important thing is to remember that one of the most important things the Bible teaches

So in the fundamentals of the faith, in Hebrews 6:1,2, we have repentance for Yahshua, faith in Yahshua, and confession of Yahshua (Romans 10:9,10), and the doctrine (teaching) of baptisms: water in Yahshua's name, in Spirit with Yahshua's name, and in "fire" for Yahshua's name. We can have hands laid on us by a minister and be prayed for in the place of Yahshua, follow Yahshua in His resurrection, and stand before Him in eternal judgment, the judgment seat of Yahshua Messiah.

For some reason (tradition), people think that everything else is centered around the name and Person of Yahshua, EXCEPT water baptism - out of complete character of the fundamentals, the words "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" are supposed to replace the name of Yahshua, when everything else is done "in the name of Yahshua" (Col. 3:17). As I said, this is partially symbolic, in terms of doing things after His example and in His authority, as a representative of Him, but people also did things by actually using the name of Yahshua - besides baptism in His name, pray in His name, cast out demons in His name, confirm others Christians in His name, receive the Spirit in His name, bless in His name, and preach in His name. In other words, do all things in His name, as the Scripture above said.

When we are baptized into His Spirit, and into His body, the church, we all have a common spiritual link and bond with one another. 1Corinthians 12 explains this well and should be read carefully. It speaks of three main things: gifts, service, and working. As in a physical body, all parts of the body share in the same life-giving blood, no matter what part it is. By the same token, all parts of the spiritual body of Messiah share in the same Spirit of life (1 Corinthians 12:4-6,11). No matter what our state as physical humans, whatever race we are, background we come from, country we were born in, political orientation we have, the level of liberty or bondage we are under, Jew or Gentile, none of that matters. This was an astonishing statement for people who had been brought up to think that those things matter. When they become Christians, it is all irrelevant and we are all on equal, level ground in Yahshua Messiah (verses 12, 13). The first four chapters of the book of Ephesians deal with this in detail, as does parts of Romans and Galatians, and it is better to direct your future studies there in this subject rather than quote entire chapters here.

"We were all baptized into One Spirit into One body,
whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we
were all given the One Spirit to drink".

1 Corinthians 12:13

"You are all Sons of God through faith in Messiah Yahshua,
for all of you who were baptized into Messiah have clothed
yourselves with Messiah. There is neither Jew nor Greek,
slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in
Messiah Yahshua!"

Galatians 3:26-29

"All of us who were baptized into Messiah Yahshua were
baptized into His death...we were therefore buried with Him
through baptism into death in order that, just as
Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the
Father, we too may live a new life."

Romans 6: 3, 4

"There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to
one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
One God and Father of all, Who is over all and in all
and through all..."

Ephesians 4:4,5

Baptism of "fire" has to be explained a little -- the words for fire and light are almost identical in Aramaic: noorah. I'm not sure there is a difference. When we are

LESSON SIX IN DETAIL

Laying on of hands has several connotations in the Bible, and it should be clear to the student what exactly is being talked about.

The idea of laying hands on a person or thing is to make a transfer of something from the lay-er to the lay-ee. At one time, it was the transfer of guilt and sin from one to another, a scapegoat, or a guilty party judged in the wrong in a dispute between people. Before a person was stoned to death in the Old Testament, the guilt of the charge was transferred from the priest through his hands into the guilty person. Later, it was to transfer healing energy from one person to another, from God. A person was often ordained or set apart to be prepared for a specific task for God by the laying on of hands to transfer spiritual power from the elders, which God gave to them, to the new person in the ministry, because as a new minister of God, they do not yet have to experience of allowing spiritual power to flow through them and the process of laying on of hands of the elders basically forced energy into them to get the power flowing. Once a person is experienced in receiving God's spiritual power, they no longer need hands laid upon them, except in special circumstances.

Hands are used in clapping, to express joy and praise, striking, in making a contract or covenant between people, or in making oaths, washing to show one is not guilty of something, pointing hands to accuse, clasping hands in fellowship and to accept one another, raised in praise and worship, and many others. Hands have many kinds of tasks and symbolic uses in the Bible, and used in many metaphors and idioms. For example, to "stretch out one's hand" can mean to begin to act on something, or to demonstrate the ability to do something. The "work of one's hands" can refer to labor or it can be what one does in service to their master or boss, or God. Like when one tries to earn salvation through what they do and refrain from doing. This goes along with "the fruit of one's hands", as in the results of their behavior. To "strengthen your hands" in the Bible is to empower one to do something in general.

A person does not need hands laid upon them, as a rule of thumb, and the injunction to not lay hands suddenly upon anyone means that it is a special occasion, and not something to do every day. It is something that one does under the direction of the Spirit of God and according to the Bible, not just for fun. Hands also mean that a thing is done by a human, physically, and not spiritually. To cleanse one's hands is to repent from sins and re-dedicate yourself to God.

The right hand, in particular, is a symbol of favor and authority, as Yahshua being at the "right hand of God the Father", meaning that He received the power and authority of Yahweh-God Himself, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me", He said. All authority to judge as God, all authority to perform executive acts and to make laws and changes as His needs require. He, at that point, is no longer just the "Son of Man" - a human being, or "the Son of God", the exact example of the Father - God, but back to being fully God Himself. Hand here means authority and control, to deliver into the hand of someone.

LESSON SEVEN IN DETAIL

The Resurrection is a key part of Christianity; without it, the rest does not matter! Without rising from a grave - literally or symbolically in baptism - we do not have life. "Unless a seed fall to the ground and dies", Yahshua said, it is not able to return in new life. Without Yahshua rising from the dead, we cannot rise from the dead in following His lead and example. And, if we do not rise from the dead, there is no afterlife, no heaven, no eternal kingdom, no eternal rewards, no continuation of our selves in what we call soul.

We await the resurrection in faith. Most Christians can believe in the resurrection of Yahshua, but when it comes to their own resurrection, they sometimes wonder, most especially when faced with the death of a loved one. To realize that the dead really are dead, and not floating around with us, or "looking down from heaven", and that we wait in hope of the resurrection, it is a test of faith. Everybody wants instant gratification; that's how this society has taught us. We want what we want NOW, not later, whether it is breakfast or heaven.

Our conversion experience should give us a partial taste of resurrection from the dead! Our old lives are "dead", our old selves are "dead", our old ways are "dead"; we are "dead" in sins and trespasses. Death, generally, means separation, namely from God and Yahshua our Savior. Being sinners, we are separated from God, a Holy and pure God that cannot fellowship with sin or persons permeated with sin. We are, on the other hand, reconciled to God through Yahshua Messiah when we are converted and truly "born again" (from above). Paul said it like this:

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;
the old has gone, the new has come!
All this is from God, Who reconciled us to Himself
through Christ and gave us the ministry of
reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world
to Himself through Christ-not counting men's sins
against them. And He has committed to us the
message of reconciliation."
2 Corinthians 5:17-19

The resurrection is a sudden, unexpected event for most, on the "Last Day", the Bible says, at Messiah's return, at the sounding of the Last Trumpet. We are not told when this is, specifically, but we know that there are seven trumpets (symbolic heralds of the beginning of another phase of God's Judgment) in the book of Revelation, so the "Last Trumpet" will be the seventh. We have to keep an open mind and study, pray, think about recent events, because there are so many interpretations of the Second Coming of Messiah Yahshua, that no one really knows what's going on, although many of them say they do. Every person who thinks he has it "figured out" has been wrong, and after 2,000 years of people failing to make an accurate prediction of the end of the world as we know it, many people lose faith. It's like they say, if it is true, I'd be able to figure it out. But since I can't figure it out, it must not be true. This is very twisted logic and ignorance of the Scriptures.

The study of the end times is another completely separate study that goes into a great deal of detail and history, and I don't believe that any one church has the full answer. What the Bible tells us for certain is that we should always be ready for Him, since He can come at any time, so if we knew the time, we would naturally slack off then prepare in earnest when the time approached. Don't tell me that's not what you would do -- just how close to April 15 did you send in your taxes?

Many years ago, an atheist tried to prove that Christianity and the Bible were false by focussing upon two main key events: the resurrection of Yahshua and the conversion of Paul. He studied all aspects of history and scripture in an effort to

LESSON EIGHT IN DETAIL

The Eternal Judgment takes some explaining. Most of us know judgment as the act of determining the guilt or innocence of a person, the truth or falsehood of a dispute, and the rightness or wrongness of a problem of morality. People, especially non-Christians, like to quote "judge not lest ye be judged!", especially when a Christian points out the sinfulness of their behavior. Darkness does NOT want the light or the guilt of conviction that goes with it. It is also a fact that we all are sinners, only some of us are saved by the Grace of God through Yahshua Messiah, and some are not. That doesn't make us any better than anyone else, in fact we have our work cut out for us and an uphill battle against sin and our old selves.

Yahshua told us to "judge righteously", or in a fair manner, putting yourself in their position, for you WILL BE in their position. That is, you will be judged in the same way as you judged others. So it is better not to judge at all if you cannot do so righteously.

We are not promised justice in this world. This is one of the harder lessons we have to learn in this life. Justice is God's nature, and God has allowed this world to be dominated by first Adam, then Satan (when Adam gave up his right to rule this world through disobedience), then the Second Adam, Yahshua, Who has the authority, but will not fully use it until His Second Coming.

One of the tasks of Yahshua as Judge is to punish evil and eradicate it from His universe. As God the Creator, He knows all things and the hearts of all of humanity. He knows how much we know, believe, and the correctness or wrongness of the information that we rely upon for making decisions. He is not going to punish someone for not being a Christian if they've never heard of Him, or only know Yahshua as a swear word, a tool of a corrupt preacher, or a carved figure, dead on a cross. He is the ultimate Judge, and the fairest of all judges. He cannot be bribed, blackmailed, or manipulated, and to try to do so will only make things worse. He cannot be tricked, lied to, or bullied by anyone, with some threat of not supporting His re-election campaign. No one will be able to say that He "just doesn't understand", for one of the reasons He came to earth was to experience what we humans have to endure in this world and be subject to all of the temptations that we have offered to us. He does understand. He knows us better than we know ourselves, and if He were to explain to us how He sees us, we may not even recognize ourselves.

Humans, on the other hand, are irredeemably corrupt. One person before a judge can get probation and a fine, and the next, for the exact same thing or worse, get life in prison - the difference being the amount of money the first defendant had. Humans do not have the benefit of divine insight, all knowledge, all sides of the story, and a look at the future affects of the behavior of all concerned. Humans do not know the "Big Picture", and are more susceptible to opinion, moods, emotions, politics, greed, impulse, revenge, flashbacks of their own past, prejudice, ego, fear, and lack of intelligence. We are human. If humans hope to perform the duties of a judge in a fair and righteous manner, we have to not only eradicate as much as possible these human weaknesses, but develop divine attributes from the Spirit of God. Since we will be judged in the same way we judge others, this would be a primary concern for us. The tenth commandment, not to covet the possessions of another, is based upon not judging in a biased human manner. When we covet, we feel that the other person does not deserve what God has blessed them with, and conversely, they do. They judge both others and themselves in a selfish manner.

We therefore should prepare ourselves for the job of judging when we have to, to do so in a way God approves of, and consider ourselves, and the fact that we also have weaknesses, just like the ones we judge, and can very easily fall into the ditch with our blind brother and play the hypocrite. We should examine ourselves daily for such things, for our state in eternity depends upon it.

LESSON NINE IN DETAIL

Prayer, to some people, is like talking to an Invisible Friend. To others, it is more talking to one's self. For others, it is a desperate call for help or the making of requests. Many religious people recite memorized or read prayers, or they repeat what a preacher or priest tells them. There are also those who pray in a way that is more for the benefit of listeners than God.

Prayer, above all, is an attitude. When one believes in the existence of God, and that He is aware of our attempts at communication, we should first have the right attitude within us. Not the proper words, complete with King James English and various forms of flattery. The actual perspective and knowledge of one's status and their relationship with a Divine Being is what is behind one's "attitude". That is, we have to keep in mind first our status - that of a sinner, a human being that has not met God's standards, but saved and reconciled to Him through Yahshua His Son, thus has access to a Holy God through Yahshua, and because of Yahshua, are considered God's children and He our Father, and secondly the status of God Himself - a Holy, Pure, All-Knowing, All-Powerful, All-Love, light, Life, Justice, Mercy, and Beauty Being that lets us come "openly to the throne of His grace, that we obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16, Lamsa).

This means that we should have the attitude of gratitude, first of all, for all He has done already for us, not just be ready with shopping list in hand to make requests. We should give thanks and praise for His favor and mercy already extended to us and which laid the foundation for our right to speak to Him at all. Without Yahshua, we wouldn't have any business calling Him for anything, as under the power and authority of Satan, the god of this world, we technically should have called him instead. But Yahshua made a way to clear the path between us and God, that alone we could not pass.

This means that we should have the attitude of humility, for we could not on our own power, knowledge, or strength pay for our own sins and therefore earn an audience with the Holy and Righteous Creator. Our own righteousness, to God, is "filthy rags", the prophet Isaiah wrote. Humans have dreamed up all sorts of ways that they imagined would please and appease God, from fasting (not eating) to sacrifice of animals or of humans, to dancing and singing to God until they drop, to cutting their bodies up to get His attention. We should be humble and know that compared to Him, we should be very glad that He loves us enough to make a way to communicate with Him, and entertain our petitions. We can please Him with humility more than nearly anything else!

But we can please Him with faith. The attitude of faith is very important to God - it is part of "worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth" (John 4:24), because faith is part of our spirit's function and it should be based upon Truth, His Word, Yahshua. Without faith, it says in Hebrews, it is impossible to please God. After what God considers a great deal of proof of His existence, and demonstrations of His reality and trustworthiness (although humans often want even more), to not believe Him and His Word is to anger Him. The writer of Hebrews said:

"Without faith, man cannot please God; for he who comes near to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."
Hebrews 11:6, Lamsa

It also says that faith "is the substance of things hoped for, just as it was the substance of things which have come to pass, and it is the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), that is, that proof of what you have faith in is the faith itself. This sounds a little bizarre to people, since they want proof first, then they believe in it, but with God, like a lot of things, it is just the reverse. The fact that us humans are able to conceive of and believe in a Higher Power, a Supreme Being sets us apart from most of the rest of creation, including the other millions of living creatures of the universe!

LESSON NINE, continued

The problem with recited prayers is mainly that it is from the "head" and not the "heart" much of the time. The most used one is the so-called "sinner's prayer", which comes in many forms, but it is basically a prayer asking for salvation through Jesus, to be forgiven for their sins, and for Him to come into their lives. This is usually acceptable when it is done with knowledge and understanding, and sincerity, not simply parroted. There is no "magic formula" that one parrots and is on their way to heaven, no matter what. That is not only stupid but a lie of Satan himself. If people can be convinced that their salvation is secure, and they need not do anything more to follow up this initial event, they will never have to pursue true salvation. They will be under the impression that it is settled and they can go do whatever they please from then on. Uncountable millions probably have played into Satan's hands by this "short cut" to salvation, without any actual change of heart or behavior.

But there is a place for recited prayers! The Bible tells us that there are times that we do not know how to pray as we ought to, and have to be assisted by the Holy Spirit in being led to what to say, which may not even be your known language (e.g. English), and may be about things or people that you have never heard of. Along with this is the fact that, in order to communicate, or even think clearly, you have to have the words, the vocabulary and concepts, that express properly what you feel and think. For example babies do not have the language, but they have needs and demands, and they will make a racket and a half howling for....something...they may not have a word for it, but whatever it is, they want it and they want it RIGHT NOW!

So prayers that are written and read can have value. They provide the basic ideas and words to express various things, and give our hearts, our spirits or inner self an idea of how to go about this thing called "prayer", a new concept to the baby Christian. A person recently saved or "born again" is very much like the infant baby on the spirit level, and has to be taught how to express their needs in the same way we have to say words to a baby and get them to repeat it until they associate the need with the word and can in the future use that word instead of a howl. For some of us, the Bible says in Romans 8, we don't know what's going on in the spirit world, but the Holy Spirit does and since it is the job of Christians to pray for certain things first, so that God can then do HIS job, He may give us words to say and pray which may be meaningless to us, but mean a lot to Him. And that's what counts.

The Orthodox churches have a huge number of prayers used, a collection which spans 2,000 years, and are very instructional for us. Too many of them are "decorated" with various embellishments and arcane terminology, and hardly necessary (the "thee" and "thou" and "thy" Old English-isms, and obscure terms like "vouchsafe" and "deign" etc.). But if they are going to be YOUR prayers, you should be able to make them say what YOU want. And in YOUR language, not Shakespeare's. God is not going to answer a prayer with words from the seventeenth century which you may not even comprehend before one you do.

If you say a prayer that is already written out enough times, it will sink into your heart from your brain and provide instruction to your spirit as to how to communicate with God. The Psalms are also used in all Christian churches, especially the Orthodox, because they contain prayers for just about every conceivable occasion, need, emotion, situation, crisis, or celebration. Memorizing parts of the Psalms is a worthy endeavor and can be used in everyday life, and should be. Most written prayers are often based at least in part on the Psalms, and mainly changed enough to meet a specific problem. That is, it will become part of you and can be used sincerely from your heart.

I'm going to provide a few basic prayers from the Orthodox church here.

Salvation

My God and Creator, I realize that I am a sinner, and can only be saved by Your grace and mercy through Your Son Yahshua and His blood. I believe He died for me and rose to life three days later, and I accept Him into my heart as my Lord and Savior, and thank You for this gift of salvation. I give up my sins so that I may please You in my new life with You. In Yahshua's name, amen.

LESSON TEN IN DETAIL

The concept of the Deity and Godhead is a very disputed and debated one, that has been the subject of arguments for centuries. No one really knows, and has to interpret Scripture and apply various forms of logic in a way that supports their ideas. This is because in order to conform to a group, one generally has to learn to parrot their dogma. When the vast majority of churches teach a "trinity" in the Godhead, but are not expected to question it or even think for themselves on the subject, lest they conclude something they are not supposed to, that is a sign that this SHOULD be questioned. God is not the god of confusion or disorder, but He is pretty much beyond our comprehension, and even if we DID understand the Godhead, our human languages are incapable of expressing such ideas in coherent form.

We have to start with what the Bible does say, not what we are taught to say from the traditions and dogma of religious institutions. We know that the Bible says:

God is ONE	There is no other God but He
God is all-knowing	God is the Creator of the Universe
God is love, light, and life	God is Spirit
God is all-good	God is the Source of all
God made humans in His image	God is above everything & everyone
God is eternal & above time	God manifests Himself in any manner
God does not have to manifest Himself if He chooses not to	
God will manifest Himself in various ways to convey different aspects of Himself	
God does not need anyone else for help or support & exists independently of all	
All that God does is just, fair, right, good, true, impartial, wise, & holy	
God does not change in substance or character, nor could or should He	
God's full and complete nature is something humans cannot imagine or understand	
God relates to His people as a Father	God has compassion & mercy on sinners
God experiences emotions	God is a Living Being & Person

There are more things I could add, but they would be repetitive and inclusive of the above. We have more than enough to work with here. Remember, all of these things were already argued and debated many times in the early years of the church by many persons, most likely smarter and more knowledgable than I and the majority of persons who would argue about it today. Therefore we can learn from this.

First, we have to acknowledge that we are human and therefore cannot know everything, and we have limits on our understanding, language, and resources. Not being God, we are not all-knowing. So there are going to be gaps in our knowledge. Secondly, God only reveals what He wants us to know, and we have to work with that. And if He does not want us to know something, we are not going to know it. Like the second coming - many people have tried to figure that out from day one, and all have failed! The Bible says that no human knows this day or hour, yet they still try. Thirdly, we can only really understand God's nature by comparisons to human things. When we think of God as "Father" we are thinking of a human concept. Before anything existed, there were no "fathers", so was God a Father then? The Bible says He is the "Everlasting Father", right? This is a good example of the limits of human language.

Now Yahshua tells us that when you've seen Him, you've seen the Father. Yahshua is the human example of God, as much as it can be expressed in human form! He was born of the Spirit of God, not the human spirit of Adam, and during His human life, He kept that Divine Spirit pure and uncontaminated from sin. Not having the spirit of Adam passed down through a human father, He did not start out with a sinful nature, but that doesn't mean He wasn't tempted in all ways a human being can be tempted, and had to exercise His will to choose what is right instead of wrong. So in order to fully "see" or understand the Father-God, we can examine how Yahshua demonstrated this Divine Character as a human being. We can relate to another human being, even if we cannot fully relate to or understand God.

Lesson twelve in detail

The section that St. Paul wrote about love is one of the most quoted and read parts of Scripture, which I will give here in its entirety from the Lamsa Bible:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love in my heart, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not love in my heart, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love in my heart, I gain nothing.

"Love is long-suffering and is kind, love does not envy, love does not make a vain display of itself, and does not boast, does not behave unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, rejoices not over injustice but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

"Love never fails. But where there be prophecies, they will cease; whether there be tongues, they will cease; whether there be knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is imperfect shall be done away.

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.

"And now abides faith, hope, and love - these three - but the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

St. Paul was making comparisons with the religious practices of the Greeks, that the people of the church of Corinth to whom he was writing could relate to. All of the spiritual gifts, no matter how spectacular or powerful, are all null and void in the absence of love. The love of God permeates all of a true Christians' life through the spirit, and it is clear that a person can have the operation of spiritual gifts without the love of God. Preaching, for example, is a good way to understand this: who cannot tell the difference between a preacher whose concern for one's soul is out of love and sincere desire to help and the preacher who "dangles his hearers over the flames of hell" as William Barclay put it, taking some delight in his ability to terrify others into the kingdom. How many people have been repelled by the message of a preacher whose constant reminders of being eternally barbecued and speared by demonic pitchforks who would have otherwise responded gladly to the love of God? How many preachers had to turn their church into a carnival or circus to attract followers?

Unlike preachers in dead churches, I do not claim that there is no place for the gifts of the Spirit anymore - the Bible obviously speaks repeatedly about them. God can and does work through others by manifesting spiritual works through those who will submit to Him and allow it. Most preachers who preach against spiritual gifts simply do not have any spiritual power and operate completely on their own steam, which does not get them far. Paul here is prioritizing, like Yahshua did in the Sermon on the Mountain (Mat. chapters 5, 6, 7). He was explaining what is more important, and not eliminating the other things, but putting them in their rightful places. In Matthew chapter 23, Yahshua tells the Scribes and Pharisees, "you have neglected the more important matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former". Likewise, the church in Corinth over-developed the gifts of the Spirit, without the more important element of the love of God! He did NOT say that they should discard the spiritual gifts! In fact, he says very specifically, "Follow the way of love AND eagerly desire spiritual gifts". Many preachers have no spiritual power because they have been taught that the only ones on earth with spiritual power are those under Satan's control. So they are saying that

Love does not boast, in the same idea of love not making a vain display of itself, means that you are careful of your words, because your words have many effects upon others, and some that are not so obvious. Especially with children, who are famous for causing your words to come back and haunt others. Boasting not only irritates others, it can cause one to run off at the mouth things that they did not mean, and make people feel negatively about them and the religion they are promoting. A lot of things adults overlook, out of politeness, if nothing else, a child or teenager will recall a year or more later and throw in your face, most of the time right when you are trying to give them the gospel message. It can also make others believe your boasts and have much higher expectations of you than you are able to fulfill. This letdown certainly can be worse for you than the boast itself. You know the old saying about keeping your words soft and sweet, for they may be the words that you have to eat. Satan's boasts, recorded in Isaiah 14, were an expression of the ultimate arrogance, of thinking one can take over heaven itself. You don't want to follow that example. There was no "love" in those boasts.

Love does not behave unseemly. One is careful of one's behavior, thinking ahead of time the possible future results of how their actions and reactions could effect and make an impression upon others, and become an obstacle, even a subconscious one, upon other's decision to accept the gospel of Yahshua and become saved. Because of the love of God, this is a primary concern, not acting in any way one decides.

Love seeks not her own: this is a focus upon selfishness, narcissism, ego, and greed. Focus on one's self can in fact interfere with the leading of God's Spirit and whatever it is He wants you to do at any given time. This does not mean that whatever it is you want to do for yourself is a "sin"; sin is breaking God's laws. What it is priorities! What God wants is more important than what you want.

Love is not easily provoked: how overlooked this one is!

How many divorces would never have happened if one's love came from God and not motivated by youthful lusts or impulse? How much of one's love is based solely on emotion and not commitment? How many problems and fights would have not taken place if one's love was that of God and not merely tolerance? Along the lines of the other characteristics of true love, this is more than patience, this is overlooking faults and slights, even if they are not so slight. This is putting up with ungrateful and selfish people, because we do not have the love of God all of the time and under all conditions. Sometimes, as humans, we just want to tell people to get lost, to put it as nicely as possible. Christian counselors and pastors know this: Sometimes we just do not feel like listening to another problem of someone else's because we have enough of our own. Or we have something else on our mind, we have plans to do something else, be somewhere else, or just be alone for a while. In the life of Yahshua, He had to go away and spend time away from others and their constant demands. He was not easily provoked, but He could be provoked. He could be angry, but without sin. His love was always the main and controlling factor in His social interactions. He knew He had to get away, once in a while, but although He could go anywhere and stay as long as He felt like it, He always came back and returned to ministering to people.

Love thinks no evil because out of love, one expects the best out of people and does not assume that they are always motivated by evil or selfish motives. As humans we are a lot of the time motivated by evil and selfish motives, but it is unhealthy for ourselves and our own mental health and our social relations to be suspicious and accusing all of the time. That is called PARANOIA. Paranoia is based upon delusions and fear, and there is no fear in love. God does not give us a spirit of fear but of LOVE and of POWER and of a SOUND (healthy) MIND. Love and sanity go together. Human love however is more akin to insanity. But the love of God has clarity of thought, not confusion, not suspicion, not delusion, and not fear. Neither is it suitable for a Christian to entertain evil thoughts habitually, which would usually nullify the acts and demonstration of love expected of a Christian.

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF YOHANNON

The "Word".

The Word (meltaw) of God is the expression, externally, of His internal intentions and will. Through His Word, He creates, destroys, and performs all other executive acts. In the Beginning - God has always used His Word in this way in relation to what He creates. "God" = Alahaw.

"Life" (Hahye) comes from Him, and no other can give it. He is the source of all life, light, and love, and the personification of such. When the Word is received, it can bring with it these things. "Light" (nuhraw) expresses His Mind and thought, and gives to us understanding. If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who will give it freely. "Love" is the motivating force to extend light and life to those who receive Him, His Word.

John (Yohannon) or the Gift of God, came to prepare people for the arrival of the Word. Moses (one who was drawn or pulled out) brought the law of God, which described boundaries and morals set in an effort to show humanity that through their own efforts, they cannot consistently keep all of His laws, and the law exists because humans are not automatically inclined to be holy before God. They may not be accountable due to immaturity or impairment or ignorance, but they still will not, without instruction and work, conduct themselves in a way that is pleasing to God as a Holy Being.

Grace (taibutaw) and Truth (kooshtaw) came from the Word. Grace and Truth were personified in the Word, Yahshua. Grace and Truth "trumped" the law, to compensate for human inadequacies. Our own righteousness, in our own strength, is a "filthy rags" before God. Grace expresses the character trait of God of Mercy, Truth expresses His reality and awareness of all things in their relation to Him. It was given also because humans nearly always want to earn their way into heaven, and be able to say that admission into the kingdom was because of their own efforts, and history has shown that humans invariably fail.

To abide is to live in, dwell, remain, continue, endure, "tarry" (an old English word for to stay or wait), and be present. To abide in Him is to be continually in fellowship and communication with Him in prayer and worship. To do this, we must have His grace and truth, we must be focused on Him enough to not have time to break this connection through sin. The expression used is often translated as "Verily" or "Truly", or, especially with the double use, He says in the strongest manner possible that what He is saying is indeed truth.

To bear witness is to affirm or swear that something is the truth, and that one is willing to accept the consequences of falsely swearing. When you bear witness of something, you are putting your life on the line to do so. So you had better be very certain that what you are swearing to and bearing witness to is the absolute truth, without any doubts. In those days, under their laws, swearing falsely could get a person killed. So when this term is used, it is a very serious statement.

Yohannon quotes from the book of Isayah (Isaiah 40:3) to answer the question about who he was: the voice of one making an announcement from the desert - clear a path for the coming of Yahweh. They asked if he was the Prophet or the Messiah, both awaited by Jews to this day, and prophesized throughout their writings (our "Old Testament"). Eliyah (Yahweh is my God) was taken up to heaven and was thought to one day be sent back, and the prophets, especially Isayah (salvation of Yahweh), spoke of the arrival of One Who would someday come and be to Israel a King, Prophet, and our High Priest. This we know as Yahshua, the Word of God.

Light also means to be conscious of and aware that something is the truth, darkness is ignorance and an incorrect perspective of reality and truth. To see likewise, as in the Psalm, "in Your light we shall see light", means to understand and have "light". We see His glory, (shubhaw) so we understand the reality of His true identity, the Word of God, expressing itself through a human form and living

and coming back up. When they baptized "unto repentance", they were saying that they had turned away from their sins and evil ways and the act of baptism made it "official". It was a public act and done so with the knowledge that others would be expecting a different kind of behavior from them to demonstrate their sincerity and commitment. Baptism in the Spirit (rokha) is to be made part of the spiritual family of God through Yahshua and belief in His Gospel. To baptize with "fire" means several things. The words for "fire" and "light" are virtually identical, or "noorah" in Aramaic. We do receive "His light" when we accept Him, but we also receive His "fire", as the book to the Hebrews says that "God is a consuming fire", and the letter to the Corinthians says that our works will be tested with fire. That is, all that is within us that is not pleasing to God will be destroyed because we cannot take it with us into the kingdom of heaven. Any part of our character that has not yet been purged and rejected here on earth will have to be separated from us and destroyed at that time. We ourselves may be saved, but through the fire. Baptism of fire is also the fact that on earth, the forces of evil consider one an enemy if you are allied with God. Persecution, torture, and death have been the consequences of being a Christian in some places and some times of history. More commonly, scorn, aggravation, ridicule, rejection, and other annoyances accompany the new convert to Christianity today.

Yohannon the Baptizer's disciples (students and followers - talmidaw) went to follow Yahshua because they recognized that Yohannon was only the announcer of the One Who is to come. They called Him Rabbi, recognizing Him as a Teacher. Andrew (marty, conquerer) went to bring Kepa (Peter, or a stone), his birth name Shimon (Simon -hearing) his brother to Yahshua. They were the sons of Jonah (Jonas or John, here Yohannon). He called Philip (lover of horses), also from the place Kepa and Andrew were from, or Bethsaida (house of fish), as they were not only fishermen but became fishers of the souls of humanity. One of the early symbols of Christianity was the fish, not the cross. Philip went to Nathaniel (God has given), who was not convinced at first, as he thought that those from Nazareth had a bad reputation. Nazareth means "sanctified" and Yahshua and His disciples indeed became sanctified and set apart for the service to God. Yahshua tells Nathaniel that He saw him under the fig tree. This causes Nathaniel to claim that Yahshua is the Son of God, the King of Israel. Perhaps Nathaniel was thinking that, if the Messiah is going to come, does He see me? Is He watching or does He know what I am thinking? That may have been the case, causing the sudden proclamation of Nathaniel of Yahshua, Someone Whom he had never met before, as the Son of God and King of Israel. The symbol of the fig tree has been explained, but it would not be unusual for someone to be resting under a tree in the hot weather.

Yahshua's last statement in this chapter was even more amazing. You will see, said He, the angels (malakim, messengers) of God coming down from heaven to Him and returning to heaven from Him. Here He calls Himself the "Son of Man", meaning His role as a fellow-human being on earth. This means that, even though He is the Son of Man, a fellow-human being, He has a spiritual side that causes the angels of God to attend to Him and submit to Him. At His temptation, angels served and helped Him in His weakness and stress, especially after not only not eating for over a month but being tempted and tested by the devil himself. Most of us have enough trouble just resisting temptations of our own desires and the minor evil spirits the average person may be bothered with. Yahshua was tempted by Satan himself, the top dog. So He needed all the help He could get after that ordeal. Angels also helped Him at other times, as that was their job. They could also be sent to help us, in some situations.